

BEIRUT (AFP) — Syria agrees with U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher on the importance of a breakthrough in its talks with Israel in 1996, Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaa said here Monday. Mr. Sharaa, after meeting President Elias Hrawi, also ruled out any link between Israeli general elections and the Middle East peace process and voiced hope for progress in the next few months "if Israel is serious." Mr. Sharaa briefed Mr. Hrawi and senior members of the government on the results of Mr. Christopher's latest peace mission to Israel and Syria and last month's resumed negotiations between the two countries. "The atmosphere of the talks with Christopher was good and friendly and there was a total understanding around the importance for a breakthrough in the Syrian and Lebanese tracks in 1996," Mr. Sharaa told a press conference. In Israel, Yossi Beilin, the Israeli minister for the peace process said Sunday: "Without a breakthrough in the negotiations during the next two or three weeks there will be no possibility of achieving peace in 1996. Mr. Beilin, warned of the possible consequences for the talks of Israeli and U.S. elections due later this year.

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Crown Prince holds talks with EU, NATO leaders Jordan, EU close to reaching association pact

By Ghaila Alal
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Monday held talks in Brussels with the president of the European Union (EU) Commission, Jacques Santer and vice president, Manuel Marín, over the association agreement that Jordan and the EU are about to conclude.

In his talks with the European officials, Prince Hassan emphasized Jordan's specificity as well as its priorities within the Euro-Mediterranean partnership dialogue.

The Crown Prince expressed hope that in the discussions for the conclusion of the agreement, Jordan's "priorities and concerns will be taken into consideration."

Prince Hassan's two-day visit to Brussels that started Sunday is aimed at bridging the gap between Jordan and the EU as well as determining points of agreement and disagreement to ensure continuous cooperation and coordination between them.

Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti, who is accompanying Prince Hassan on the trip, told Jordan Television Monday.

During the visit, Prince Hassan outlined the European officials Jordan's position on economic, security as well as culture and human cooperation with the EU.

Prince Hassan said that

Jordan aimed at reforming its economy as it moved towards free trade with the EU. However, this process was slowed down in light of the responsibilities the Kingdom had to shoulder in the whole region, which have left negative effects on its economy.

Mr. Kabariti meanwhile said that Jordan recognises that all states wishing to enter into partnership with EU need to apply European standards. "We respect these standards and should try to adjust Jordan's specificity as far as possible in a manner that would fulfil the common interest" of both sides.

The Crown Prince stressed Jordan's need for international loans and grants in order for it to successfully implement its economic reform programmes.

The Crown Prince also met with Javier Solana, secretary general of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), stressing that mutual challenges and the legacy of conflict could only be resolved in the spirit of Euro-Jordanian partnership.

The Crown Prince expressed Jordan's readiness to take part in peacekeeping missions in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Kabariti said the two sides reached agreements on most of the issues pertaining to the Kingdom's participation in peacekeeping efforts in the Balkan.

Addressing Jordan's regional political role and the

democratic process it has launched, the Crown Prince pointed to Jordan's open political system in which opposition parties are included. This successful approach to dealing with and accepting the opposition as part of the political system, makes Jordan the only true pluralistic society in the Arab World, a statement faxed to the Jordan Times by the Prince's office said.

The Crown Prince stressed that economic and social stability were vital for the consideration of the Kingdom's democratic process with special emphasis on civil rights and institution building.

Prince Hassan also pointed to Jordan's efforts to maintain stability and security in the region, referring to the Regional Security Centre which the Kingdom has established to promote stability in the area.

He said that Jordan had always been at the forefront of fighting terrorism in all its manifestations and combating drug trafficking to and through the Kingdom. But the Prince noted to the difficulties posed by virtue of the length of the Jordan's borders with neighbouring countries and the lack of resources to fulfil such duties.

In a bid to contribute to securing a peaceful world, Prince Hassan said Jordan also took part in the collective security arrangement sponsored by the United Nations. He added that Jordan

was also committed to establishing a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction, adding that Jordan was preparing a draft agreement on this issue with the countries of the Arab League, the statement said.

During his visit, the Crown Prince held talks with Padraig Flynn, the European Commissioner for Human Rights, and briefed him on Jordan's efforts to strengthen inter-faith dialogue. During his meeting with the Crown Prince Mr. Flynn stressed the necessity of combating Islamophobia, anti-Semitism as well as other forms of prejudice and racism.

At the end of his visit, His Majesty King Hussein held talks with the Belgian Prime Minister Jean-Luc Dehaene, and discussed with him issues of common interest as well as bilateral relations between the two countries. The talks with NATO officials were attended by His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Ibn Al Hussein and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Lt. General Hafez Mirai. The talks with NATO also dealt with the upgrading of dialogue that NATO seeks with southern Mediterranean countries, especially as Jordan was chosen as a partner in this dialogue.

"We are extremely interested in updating this dialogue, which we believe will work in favour of Jordan as well as the causes of stability and security in the region," Mr. Kabariti told JTV.

He said he hoped that what the two countries achieved after signing the treaty would



His Majesty King Hussein Mouday addresses a visiting delegation from the Israeli Histadrut, representing 80 trade unions, at Basman Palace (Petra photo)

King: Jordan committed to comprehensive, warm peace

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein Monday met at Basman Palace with a delegation representing the Israeli workers union, the Histadrut, and reiterated Jordan's commitment to a comprehensive peace in the Middle East and a warm peace between Jordan and Israel.

King Hussein, who was presented by the delegation with a painting of Jerusalem as a token gift, said he felt sure that Jordanian-Israeli relations will be an example to other countries in the region to emulate, voicing satisfaction over the tangible results of the peace treaty signed between the two countries in 1994.

He said he hoped that what the two countries achieved after signing the treaty would

fall within the context of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East so that "the descendants of the children of Abraham will enjoy the opportunities to build together."

The King said Jordan and Israel would ratify several agreements in Aqaba on Thursday to complete what the two countries have embarked on when they signed the treaty, emphasizing that people will feel more and more the dividends of peace.

The King paid tribute to the late Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, and said Mr. Rabin's death was a personal loss for him.

"He was a man of great courage, wisdom, commitment and he was my partner in bringing about peace be-

tween our countries," the King said.

"But this loss will give us more determination in the times ahead to ensure that nothing will stand in our way to achieve peace in the face of all forces that will try to stop us from achieving that objective," he added.

King Hussein said he will continue to work with Prime Minister Shimon Peres in the future to ensure that rapid progress has been made to secure comprehensive peace.

King Hussein, who at the outset of the meeting was briefed about the Histadrut's role in Israel, voiced joy over meeting the delegation, which represents 80 Israeli towns and villages and is composed of Jews, Muslims, Christians and Druze.

Following are excerpts

from the King's address at the meeting:

"I hope that this meeting will be followed by many visits to our country in the future and I hope that the remainder of the visit will be a pleasant one and that you will feel at home and amongst your friends."

"As I understand, you are travelling south, and I hope the weather is kind as we are expecting some rain and snow. I know that in both countries we are happy when we have that kind of weather, but I am sure that it will be for you kind and I hope you will enjoy Petra and the south and that you will come again."

"I would like to say how happy I am with what our efforts are producing and the

(Continued on page 7)

Arafat arrives in Bahrain

MANAMA (R) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat arrived in Bahrain on Monday on the second leg of a Gulf tour, the Gulf news agency reported. It said Mr. Arafat would hold talks with Bahrain's Emir Sheikh Isa Bin Salman Al Khalifa on "liberated" Palestinian self-rule areas. Palestinian elections due to be held on Jan. 20, and the Middle East peace process. Mr. Arafat flew to Manama from Saudi Arabia where he met Crown Prince Abdullah and other officials.

Gaza power station deal signed

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AFP) — France's state power authority Electricite de France (EDF) and Delma of the United States have won a contract to build a thermal power plant in Gaza City, the Palestinian Energy Commission said Monday. Commission official Rafiq Maliha said EDF, Delma and the Palestinian Authority signed a preliminary agreement for construction of the \$160 million 175 megawatt plant on Saturday. He said power generated by the plant, due under the contract to be fully on line in 1997, will be 30 per cent cheaper than the price now paid by the Palestinian ruled territory to purchase electricity from Israel.

Israeli shot and wounded in Bethlehem

BETHLEHEM, West Bank (AFP) — An Israeli man was shot and wounded Monday while shopping in this Palestinian-controlled town, Israeli police said. They said the man, wounded in the hand and shoulder, drove himself to an Israeli army checkpoint outside Bethlehem and was taken to a Jerusalem hospital, police said.

Netherlands pledges full support for peace-building in Mideast

AMMAN (J.T.) — Dutch Prime Minister Wim Kok Monday ended a two-day visit to Jordan and headed for the West Bank saying that the Netherlands was exerting all its efforts to ensure the establishment of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East region.

Addressing journalists shortly before departure, Mr. Kok said his country was hoping that peace will be complete with the conclusion of agreements on both the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

He also pledged the European Union's continued assistance to the Arab countries in general and Jordan in particular in the economic,

political and developmental fields.

Mr. Kok said his country appreciated His Majesty King Hussein's efforts to develop Jordan and to widen the country's scopes of cooperation with the rest of the world.

"Jordan plays a leading role in accomplishing a just peace in the region and in creating a European Middle Eastern partnership in all fields," he said.

"Acting in the spirit of the Amman and the Barcelona conferences, the Netherlands is expected to exert efforts towards bolstering its ties with Jordan and the Arab region at large in the econo-

mic, political and investment fields," the prime minister said.

Earlier Monday Mr. Kok, accompanied by foreign minister Hans van Mierlo inaugurated the Dutch embassy in Amman and in a brief statement to the press Mr. Mierlo said he hoped that the step will further bolster ties between the two countries.

So far the Dutch Ambassador in Damascus acted as a non-resident ambassador to Jordan.

Also Monday Mr. Kok met the speakers of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament and was briefed on Jordan's parliamentary and democratic life.

Mr. Kok later left Amman for the Palestinian territories and Israel, the third leg of Middle East tour that has already taken him to Damascus. He is due to visit the autonomous Gaza Strip on Thursday.

Security Council to send fact-finding mission to Iraq

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — Key members of the UN Security Council agreed Monday on the need to send a mission to Iraq to evaluate its humanitarian situation after five years of international sanctions. Western diplomats said.

In consultations in New York, representatives of the 15 council member states discussed a draft letter drawn up by this month's council President, Sir John Weston of Britain, based on an idea put forth by France.

The United States, which has taken the toughest line against Iraq, agreed on the text which was to be sent in a few days to U.N. Secretary General Boutros-Ghali, participants said.

A total trade embargo including Iraq's economically crucial oil exports has been imposed on Baghdad since Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990. Iraqi civilians have

been those hardest hit by the sanctions which were not expected to be lifted any time soon.

At a routine Jan. 5 meeting to review the sanctions, France voiced regret that since 1991 the council had not received a comprehensive report from an impartial authority on humanitarian conditions in Iraq.

A copy of the letter obtained by AFP would have the council ask the U.N. chief to send a mission to Iraq to complete a detailed report that would be delivered if possible before March 1.

French companies are among those from several countries keen to take part in Iraq's oil industry, and unable to do so as long as the sanctions last.

The next council review of sanctions on Iraq was expected around March 5.

Meanwhile Iraq said on Monday the lifting of curbs

on its oil exports was the "right way" to ease the suffering of its people.

Culture and Information Minister Abdul Ghani Abdul Ghafer said Iraq had done all that was required from it under the 1991 Gulf war ceasefire to have the oil embargo removed.

"Iraq requests the adoption of practical measures to lift the suffering it is under... undoubtedly the right way to achieve this target... is in the taking of action to apply paragraph 22 of Resolution 667," Mr. Abdul Ghafer said in remarks carried by state-run newspapers.

Israel in full alert for possible attacks Police evict Hebron settlers

HEBRON, West Bank (Agencies) — Israeli police on Monday forced Jewish settlers out of government-owned buildings they illegally took over near the West Bank Palestinian city of Hebron six months ago, witnesses said.

Dozens of settlers moved into the complex some 200 metres from Kiryat Arba settlement in July to protest at Israel's plans to hand over parts of the West Bank to the Palestinians under a self-rule deal.

Israel Radio said the buildings were erected to house Israeli security forces.

Witnesses said hundreds of policemen, armed with door punchers and ladders, surrounded the complex and began evacuating the settlers. They ripped down window shutters when they entered the apartments.

Policemen carried some settlers, who came out kicking and shouting, to buses. Policewomen carried babies out.

The evacuation took place five days before more than one million Palestinian voters are due to vote for an 88-member legislative council and president for its executive branch.

Israel, which had turned over six West Bank cities to the Palestinians under a self-rule deal signed in September, is due to hand over parts

of Hebron in March. Palestinians in the city will take part in the Jan. 20 poll.

Hebron, home to more than 100,000 Palestinians, has been a flashpoint for Arab-Israeli violence. Settler Baruch Goldstein killed 29 Palestinian worshippers at the traditional tomb of the Biblical patriarchs there two years ago.

Some 400 Jewish settlers live in the city and about 4,000 more live in Kiryat Arba.

Meanwhile, Israel was in a double state of alert Monday as police warned that both Islamic and Jewish extremists were planning attacks ahead of the Palestinian elections.

"Fundamentalists from Hamas and Islamic Jihad movements plan to carry out attacks which could disrupt the elections," Karmi Gilon, outgoing head of the Shin Bet internal security service, told Israeli radio.

Officials said the army, police and Shin Bet had stepped up security in public places and buses, notably in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and authorities issued appeals for public vigilance.

General Oren Shabor, chief of Israeli activities in the Palestinian territories, said Monday that Hamas leaders had ordered an immediate resumption of anti-Israeli attacks, breaking an agreement with the Palesti-

nian National Authority (PNA) to refrain from acts that could disrupt Saturday's self-rule elections.

Gen. Shabor told Israeli radio the assassination of Yahya Ayyash, the master Hamas bomb-maker who was killed on Jan. 5 by suspected Israeli agents, had led the group to change its position.

"The Hamas leadership abroad has ordered its followers in the Palestinian territories to carry out anti-Israeli attacks and to boycott the elections," he said.

"This change runs against the recent agreement reached in Cairo between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority," he said, calling the new Hamas position "a turning point."

Islamic radicals have pledged to avenge the killings of Mr. Ayyash and of Islamic Jihad leader Fathi Shaqaqi, who was gunned down by suspected Israeli agents in October in Malta.

The daily Yediot Aharanot, quoting military sources, reported Monday that Hamas had recently succeeded in moving explosives from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank in preparation for a suicide bombing.

Tensions were further heightened by a police warning that members of a radical Jewish sect were planning a

Al Gore arrives in Israel

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — U.S. Vice President Al Gore arrived in Israel Monday for talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders on the Middle East peace process.

Mr. Gore, flying in from a one-day visit to Egypt, was greeted on his arrival at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport by Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

Mr. Gore said at the airport that the "enemies of peace" were realising that "peace and understanding are on the march in our world."

"They heard the people of Israel sing in one resounding voice the line of their national anthem... 'hope is not yet lost'," he said.

The two men then left for Jerusalem, where Mr. Peres was to host an official dinner for Mr. Gore at the Knesset, Israel's parliament.

Mr. Gore and Mr. Peres will hold talks early Tuesday before the vice president heads to the West Bank town of Jericho for a meeting with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, the US embassy said.

U.S. ambassador Martin Indyk said Mr. Gore's talks with Mr. Peres and Foreign Minister Ehud Barak would focus on U.S. support for Israel-Syria peace talks which

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued on page 7)

Kabul's peace drive looks set to flounder in north

MAZAR-I-SHARIF, Afghanistan (AFP) — Factional leaders in this northern Afghan stronghold have dashed hopes of an imminent peace pact with the Kabul government, saying the time was not yet right.

The rejection of a deal in the short term between Uzbek warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum and President Burhanuddin Rabbani came amid widespread speculation that the two sides were preparing to bury the hatchet after two years of fighting.

"A peace agreement is not yet close," said General Rasool Palawan, Gen. Dostum's influential second-in-command who observers believe has a military force more powerful than that of his boss.

"It's up to General Dostum of course, but I'm not happy about entering into any peace deal with Rabbani and (his top commander) General Ahmad Shah," Massoud yet because too much has happened between our groups to just forget about it," he said.

The reports of an upcoming deal followed an unprecedented offer by Mr. Rabbani last month to travel to the provincial bases of all the warring groups — including Gen. Dostum's headquarters here — for peace talks.

A top-level Kabul delegation flew here for talks with Gen. Dostum and his Jumbish movement just days after the offer, prompting public and even official expectations of an imminent peace agreement or even alliance.

At the time, Kabul officials spoke of a "major and basic" improvement in their ties with Gen. Dostum and were upbeat about the possibility of a deal with weeks.

But Gen. Palawan, a large and imposing figure in his 40s who commands enormous power and control in this northern region, said he personally was opposed to a peace mission to Mazar-i-Sharif by the president.

"I will respect Dostum's decision, but I think it's fair to say that we don't expect to see Rabbani here for a while as he and his men have killed too many people over the years and have declared a Jihad (holy war) on us."

"Through such acts, he and Massoud have lost credibility among the people here which has not been restored yet," Gen. Palawan told AFP.

He said Mr. Rabbani's initiative to talk to other factions about a broad-based power sharing system was a cynical manoeuvre aimed at extracting the government from a military and political bind.

"Kabul is under siege from the Taliban and the government now needs our help to open up the supply routes to the capital. As far as I'm concerned, there can be no peace until Rabbani and Massoud step down," Gen. Rasool added.

Top officials close to Gen. Dostum were however far more optimistic about an eventual peace agreement with Kabul, but admitted that a lot more ground work had to be done.

"We are very happy that Rabbani wants to come here to negotiate a peaceful solution to this conflict as we believe there will only be peace if all groups can sit down and talk," Gen. Dostum's assistant Aziz Ullah Kargar said.

"It would be good to see a lasting peace between our parties, but its not yet clear whether the time is right for us to broker an alliance or peace deal with Kabul," he added.

"At the moment," it's too early to start preparing peace documents until more talks on more issues have taken place," he added.

Foreign analysts said they believed Gen. Palawan constituted the main obstacle blocking an immediate pact between the two sides, which usually agree on ethnic grounds, despite two years of fighting since Gen. Dostum pulled out of Mr. Rabbani's government.

"Dostum is under a lot of pressure from his traditional allies Russia and Uzbekistan as well as from Iran to come to a peaceful settlement, but I can't see a pact being signed as long as Rasool remains so powerful and opposes such a deal," one said.

One of the key components of any agreement would be the opening of the Salang pass south of here, on the main road linking Kabul with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, which would be a crucial source of supplies for the besieged and embattled Afghan capital.

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SOLDIERS EVICT SETTLERS: Israeli soldiers Monday push Jewish settlers to a bus as they are arresting them. Israeli police forced the settlers out of government-owned building on the outskirts of the Kiryat Arba settlement next to Hebron. Police say the settlers illegally took over the building some six months ago (see page 1 story) (Reuters photo)

Yusra unharmed in brief hostage ordeal

CAIRO (Agencies) — A masked man with an automatic rifle held the Egyptian actress Yusra hostage in her Cairo flat on Sunday evening but police arrested him after half an hour and the actress was unharmed, police said.

Junior policemen at the scene said the gunman was a police officer demanding money for an operation for one of his relatives. Senior officers would not confirm this.

The man went to Yusra's flat in the expensive central district of Zamalek, found she was not at home, took her two servants hostage and told them to call her, she said.

When Yusra came home, he held her as well but her driver alerted the headquarters of the VIP protection unit, which happens to be in the same street, police said.

Reuters photographer Alaa Abdel Naby heard two bursts of two or three shots of automatic fire each but it was not clear who fired them. There were no reports of injuries.

The whole incident lasted more than an hour but there were no details of exactly how the police carried out the arrest.

Yusra, who is about 40, is one of Egypt's best-known actresses with a career spanning more than two decades. One of her latest film roles was in Youssef Chahine's "The Emigrant," which won critical acclaim abroad.

Yusra has been accused of outraging public decency by two Islamic fundamentalist lawyers after the photograph of her wearing a bodice appeared on the cover of a film magazine in November.

The trial against the actress and three of the magazine's employees opened in the northern town of Damam in December and is set to continue next month. The lawyers are asking for sentences of one year in jail.

The offending photograph, which the lawyers claimed showed the actress practically nude, is a still from Yusra's latest film, the anti-fundamentalist "Birds of Darkness" which has been a huge hit in Egypt.

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Four Swiss businessmen go on trial over Saddam's 'supergun'

LAUSANNE, Switzerland (AFP) — The trial began Monday of four leading Swiss businessmen accused of helping Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein build what was to be the biggest cannon in history.

The three directors of Von Roll, Switzerland's biggest steel group, and the director of trading company Uldry are charged with violating laws on exporting war material.

They are alleged to have supplied Iraq with 10 million Swiss francs (\$8 million) worth of hardware for President Saddam's so-called "supergun" between 1988 and 1990.

It was said to be part of a scheme involving a half dozen European countries as Iraq imported material from all over the world to build a huge cannon with a range of between 700 and 1,000 kilometres capable of hitting targets throughout the Middle East, including Israel.

The 37-page charge sheet read out here by prosecutor Felix Baenziger said they agreed to declare the hardware as hydraulic cylinders for forging presses when they knew it would be used for the supergun.

That contravened a 1972 Swiss law banning the manufacture and sale of such material without permission from the government and which calls for sanctions against companies providing false information to secure permits.

Mr. Baenziger said negotiations for the sale began when Iraq was still at war with Iran and that Von Roll had earlier delivered cannon cylinders using Uldry as an intermediary.

The Von Roll defence is that the Iraqis deceived it about the end use of the cylinders ordered by the Iraqi industry ministry.

It says the gun would have been so big — 157 metres long with a calibre of one metre — that it would not have worked, and that was why it was impossible to guess how its cylinders would be used.

The project, codenamed Babylon by the Iraqis, had been initiated about 10 years earlier during its war with Iran.

It was abandoned in October 1991 after the failed invasion of Kuwait and a cannon of 52.2 metres in length and 350 centimetre in diameter was destroyed under U.N. supervision as part of international sanctions against Iraq.

However some experts have challenged the supergun theory, saying the project was unfeasible.

The affair first came to light when 131 tonnes of parts of huge proportions were seized in Switzerland and Germany in May 1990, three months before Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait before being driven out by allied forces.

Other seizures were made in Britain, Greece, Italy and Turkey after Iraq supposedly tried to spread the orders among several countries to avoid giving away the exact nature of what it was building.

Canadian engineer Gerald Bull, who pioneered the supergun, was murdered in Brussels in March 1990.

The four accused, who include the former director-general of Von Roll Heinz Frech, face up to five years imprisonment and a maximum fine of 500,000 Swiss francs (more than \$400,000).

if fuelled by the opposition of Islamic fundamentalists to the veneration of the many Muslim "saints" in the region.

"Worshipping saints means recognising other divinities than God," said Abdul Qader Quini, an official of the fundamentalist Al Islah Party.

The fundamentalists are becoming increasingly influential in Yemen, and dozens of shrines similar to that in Asnaf have been ransacked by their followers.

Mr. Quini puts the vandalism down to "young enthusiasts" and says it is not officially sanctioned by Al Islah. "We prefer persuasion and education," he said.

The opposition of fundamentalists makes life harder for the team of archaeologists drawn by the beauty of the small, square mosque in Asnaf, built into the slope of a hill.

"We have to work discreetly and be careful of people's sensitivity," said Marlene Barret, a French archaeologist supervising the restoration of Abbas' tomb which is decorated with gold leaf and surrounded by inscriptions from the Muslim holy book, the Koran.

The inhabitants of Asnaf may soon have other visitors to contend with as the tourists Yemeni is trying to attract to help solve its money problems start arriving in the village to see the renowned tomb.

Turkey to sue magazine for defamation

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey is to sue the British-owned newspaper The European for running a report that Turkish security forces used decapitation methods in suppressing Kurdish rebels, a government official said Monday.

"Efforts will be made for legal action against those foreign publications which, under the effect of terrorist organisations, use untrue stories defaming our country," foreign ministry spokesman Nurettin Nurkan told a news briefing.

He was referring to a recent news story and photographs published by The European which suggested that Turkish security forces used barbaric methods in operations against Kurdish rebels fighting for a homeland in the southeast.

One picture showed a soldier in Turkish army uniform holding the severed head allegedly of a Kurdish rebel.

The European's report, alongside what it described as "the least horrifying of a set of 12 pictures" passed to it, said the photographs claimed to show Turkish government troops "in the act of celebrating in barbarous fashion a victory over their Kurdish enemy."

It said: "If genuine — and The European has been shown no reason to believe they are not — they are also graphic evidence to support those in Europe who believe that Turkey's human rights record makes it unfit for the membership of the European Union to which it aspires."

The Turkish army said that the pictures were photomontages and blamed publication on "the terrorist organisation (Kurdistan Workers' Party) which has suffered major setbacks and lost popular support in an attempt to obtain political backing abroad."

Other flights (Terminal 2)

11:15 Aden, Hudaib (DY)
14:20 Rome (AZ)
14:55 Munich, Aleppo (YP)
18:15 Dubai (EK)
20:10 Beirut (ME)
23:40 Amsterdam (KL)
00:25 Bucharest (RO)
01:10 London (RJ)

Other flights (Terminal 1)

06:15 Beirut (RJ)
06:20 Agaba (RJ)
11:05 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:05 Montreal, Toronto (RJ)
11:11 Vienna, Frankfurt (RJ)
11:45 Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
12:00 Paris, Brussels (RJ)
12:05 London (RJ)
12:15 Larnaca (RJ)
12:30 Jeddah (RJ)
12:45 Damascus (RJ)
21:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
22:15 New Delhi (add) (RJ)
23:30 Singapore (RJ)

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12:30 Jeddah (RJ)
12:45 Damascus (RJ)
21:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
22:15 New Delhi (add) (RJ)
23:30 Singapore (RJ)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Palestinian prisoners freed

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Israel released on Monday the last group of Palestinian inmates to be freed ahead of Jan. 20 elections in the territories, Israeli sources said. According to an accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), the Jewish state agreed to free a total of 1,200 prisoners ahead of Palestinian elections. PLO sources said 115 Palestinians held in Israeli jails for criminal offences were handed over to Palestinian police in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israel Radio said 160 inmates were handed over. "The 115 criminal prisoners were transferred to Gaza and the West Bank, with their files, where they will serve the rest of their sentences," said PLO official Hisham Abdel Razek. Last week Israel freed a total of 1,042 people as stipulated under an accord it signed last September with the PLO.

Israel to send 2,000 policemen to Jerusalem

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel is to send 2,000 extra police to East Jerusalem to keep order during voting in historic Palestinian general elections this weekend, police said Monday. The reinforcements, drawn from throughout the country, will be on their guard for attacks by "extremist Jews or Arabs opposed to the peace process," a police source said. Some 70,000 Palestinians in East Jerusalem have registered to vote in Saturday's elections for an autonomy council and president of a self-rule authority. East Jerusalem, which has an Arab population of about 160,000, was annexed by Israel after the 1967 war and the Israeli-right wing has complained that Palestinian voting there poses a threat to Israeli sovereignty over the city. The right-wing and Jewish settlers have called for a mass demonstration "in defence of Jerusalem" on polling day, but only after sunset when the Jewish sabbath comes to a close.

Leah Rabin to get office, chauffeur

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Israeli parliament approved on Monday the allocation of \$100,000 per year to the widow of slain Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to pay for a secretary, office and official car with chauffeur. The Knesset finance committee agreed to provide Leah Rabin with the money for three years due to the "exceptional circumstances" of the death of her husband, shot by a Jewish extremist in November. Similar benefits are usually reserved for former presidents and prime ministers. Finance Minister Avraham Shohat proposed the allocation at the request of Leah Rabin, who after the assassination said: "The circumstances of my husband's death have forced me to take on a large number of public activities in Israel and abroad, requiring adequate financial resources." Committee members from the rightwing opposition Likud Party abstained in the vote.

Iran's foreign minister arrives in Kuwait

KUWAIT (R) — Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati on Monday arrived in Kuwait and was due to meet the Gulf Arab state's Emir Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah. An Iranian embassy statement said Mr. Velayati, carrying a letter from Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani will discuss regional issues with Sheikh Jaber and other senior officials. Mr. Velayati will also meet Crown Prince Sheikh Saeed Al Abdullah Al Sabah, Parliament Speaker Ahmad Al Sadoun and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah before leaving on Tuesday, the statement said. The visit is Mr. Velayati's third since the 1991 Gulf War that ended Iraq's seven-month occupation of Kuwait.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 77311-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:00 Captain Planet
14:30 Jonny Quest
15:15 Spirit of Adventure
15:40 Scientific Eye
16:30 Voyagers
17:15 Children Programme — Les Bado-locks
17:30 Serie — Los Compagnons De L'Aventure
18:00 Medical Magazine — Savoir Plus Sante
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Magazine — Ushuaia
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 You Bet Your Life
20:00 The Secret of the Treasure Islands
20:25 Hawaii Five-0
21:00 99-1 (Police Drama)
22:00 News in English
22:25 I'll Take Manhattan (EP, 6)
23:15 Feature Film: "Angel"

PRAYER TIMES

05:10 Fajr
06:32 Sunrise/Duha
11:40 Dhuhr
14:34 Asr
16:58 Maghreb
18:20 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swatish, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrasanta Church Tel. 623366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 652826
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Assyrian International Church Tel. 635725
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 634328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Tel. 654952
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691
The Evangelical Local Church In Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
A depression will affect the region today, so temperatures will

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

drop and rain will fall with winds becoming westerly active.
On Wednesday and Thursday a new depression is expected to affect the region. Heavy rain is expected with a chance of snow falling over Shabab mountains Wednesday that might cover the mountains of Ajloun as well on Thursday with winds westerly active.
In Agaba, skies will be partly cloudy with a chance of scattered showers. Winds will be southerly active and seas rough.
Min./Max. temp.
Amman 3/10
Agaba 10/18
Deserts 3/12
Jordan Valley 9/16

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 14, Agaba 20, Humidity readings: Amman 44 per cent, Agaba 25 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Osama Al Hussaini 847289
Dr. Khalil Abu Marjoun 779797

Dr. Bilal Al Sayid 890280
Dr. Mohammad Al Tazeh 727791
Femina pharmacy 773336
Al Asma pharmacy 637055
Naboukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shamsi pharmacy 637660
Naboukh pharmacy 623672
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281741
Akqas pharmacy (—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Akram Haddad 985550
Khalil pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Emergency 630341
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 671001
Blood Bank 77121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605900
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467

Amman Municipality
Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Anas 6442816
Akhil Maternity, J. Anas 6424412
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Mallat, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeici 670701
Shmeici Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Musashir Hospital 6672779
The Islamic, Abdali 66612757
Al-Abil, Abdali 6641646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 77101/3

Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/26
Army



Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor Monday plant trees during the major ceremony to mark Arbor Day at the Hashemite University in Zarqa (Photo by Yousef 'Allan)

King, Queen attend Arbor Day celebrations

ZARQA (Petra) — Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor Monday attended Arbor Day celebrations, which were organised by the Ministry of Agriculture on the grounds of the Hashemite University in Zarqa, and took part in the planting of trees.

Taking part in the planting of trees were Chief of the Royal Court Marwan Al Qasbi, His Highness Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad and the King's advisers as well as representatives of the diplomatic missions in Jordan.

Also attending the celebration were Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, the speakers of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament, Minister of Agriculture Mansour Ben Tarif and other officials.

Speaking after the celebration, Mr. Ben Tarif said that his ministry was pursuing efforts to fulfil the King's target of greening Jordan by the year 2000.

The Ministry of Agriculture, he said, is planting fruit and forest trees on suitable areas.

He said that the ministry is annually planting fruit trees in 100,000 dunums of land in mountainous areas. In cooperation with the private sector, he said, the ministry is annually planting forest trees as wind breaks around farms and along roads.

The Ministry of Agriculture earlier announced that it had made arrangements for other tree planting celebrations in different parts of Jordan. It said that around eight million forest tree saplings will be planted during 1996.

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France assures region of funding for water projects

Irsheidat pledges more efficient management of water resources, points to increased demand

AMMAN (Petra) — France Monday told a regional seminar on water management in Amman that it will continue to provide financial and technical assistance to the various regional water ministries through an international water bureau based in Paris.

French Ambassador to Jordan Bernard Bajot said at the opening session of the three-day meeting, attended by delegates from Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, that since a great deal of water resources are being used for irrigation purposes and since the water needs continue to grow every year, "the countries of the region ought to reach a water sharing agreement and to find a new and modern technology to benefit from treated waste water on the other."

Referring to French aid to Jordan, Mr. Bajot said that under protocols signed by France and Jordan in 1994 and 1995, Paris granted Jordan soft loans totalling 14.5 million French francs, adding that Paris had earlier granted the Kingdom loans amounting to 65 million francs to carry out water network projects in Irbid, Mafraq and southern Jordan Valley regions.

Minister of Water and Irrigation Saleh Irsheidat opened the meeting by stressing that Jordan can only develop its water sector and water resources through close cooperation with friendly nations and international organisations with experience in this field.

The minister said that the water deficit is increasing every day due to increased demand resulting from population growth, the improvement of the standard of living and the economic development in the country.

He said in the light of the meagre water resources, there is a need for improving the management of water resources and efficiency in using them. He also said Jordan needs to cooperate with France and other countries in developing its water resources.

The meeting, he said, will review French experiences and water applications in Jordan and the implementation of French-Jordanian protocols which provide for the execution of the Adasieh water project and the drawing of water from Deir Alla to Amman.



Minister of Water and Irrigation Saleh Irsheidat (centre) Monday addresses a regional seminar on water (Petra photo)

During the meeting, which is organised by the Ministry of Water and Irrigation in cooperation with the French embassy in Amman, several papers dealing with water resources, water networks, sewerage networks, recycling treated waste water and irrigation will be reviewed.

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'Arab World needs educational revolution'

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Education in the Arab World requires a "revolution." School curricula should be reviewed, and teacher training institutions should be established to take into consideration the needs of talented students, participants in a regional workshop on the education of gifted and talented students stressed Monday.

Experts in the field of education, who came from eight Arab countries to attend the workshop, complained about the lack of funds, and the current education system which, they said, is designed for "average" students and taught by "average" teachers, hence neglecting the creative as well as students with learning difficulties.

They stressed that a large number of talented students drop out of school because they are bored with the curriculum and find it insufficiently challenging.

"The curriculum should be flexible and adaptive to fit the abilities of talented students," said Salah Eldin Allam, a professor of education and psychology at Al Azhar University, Cairo.

Dr. Allam stressed the Arab World's need for qualified teachers who are trained to accommodate and encourage gifted students.

The four-day workshop, which was opened at the Jubilee School for out-



Modern educational facilities are still lacking in schools in the Arab World (File photo)

standing students on Sunday, was described by Jordanian participants as "one step forward," but they said that the workshop discussed complicated issues and its approach was unsuitable in light of the current facilities available at Jordanian public schools.

For example, an issue on the agenda was a discussion of examinations designed to identify outstanding students. According to Hamad Mahameh, director of the Counselling Department at the Ministry of Education, "some of the examination kits are not available at the ministry."

Another ministry official

said public schools in Jordan are ill-equipped to accommodate talented students much less than carry out examinations of the specifications discussed during the workshop.

The Jubilee School, founded in 1993, is the first and only school in the Kingdom to cater to the needs of outstanding students. At present 220 students are enrolled in the 9th and 10th grades.

Hussein Saleh, director of the High School Education Department at the ministry, told the Jordan Times that there are not sufficient financial incentives to attract qualified teachers

in this sphere of education to work in the ministry's schools, citing the "significant" salary difference between teachers at the Jubilee School and governmental schools.

The Ministry of Education established a department last year to cater to the needs of outstanding students. But the department was not properly designed to meet these needs, said Mr. Mahameh.

"The department lacks the suitable educators required for the job at hand," he said.

The ministry has two systems for dealing with gifted students. The first one, which has been suspended, gives a student the opportunity to skip the third grade only. The other system is called education acceleration, which gives outstanding students the opportunity to study the curriculum of a higher grade, but not during school hours.

"This system relies mainly on the parents," said Mr. Mahameh. That, he added, was impractical, particularly when some parents are illiterate.

On the programme of the workshop Tuesday is a discussion via satellite with experts from the U.S.

On Wednesday, participants will draw up recommendations and review a proposal for the establishment of an Arab society for the gifted

Trial of rape suspects opens

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The trial of two men accused of raping a 14-year-old girl last June opened Monday at the Criminal Court, but the two witnesses for the prosecution, including the victim, failed to appear.

The defendants, Nizar A., 20, and Mohammad A., 21, who pleaded innocent, are charged with kidnapping then raping Jasia H. at knife-point.

The charge sheet, read out by Presiding Judge Abdul Rubman Tawfiq, alleged that Nizar and Mohammad kidnapped Jasia from Al-Nasr Plaza in Amman on June 30.

The defendants took the youth to Nizar's apartment in Wihdat and raped her, the document charged.

The court papers said that Jasia told her family of the sexual assault, and they informed the authorities.

The men were arrested by police the following day.

Because the two prosecution witnesses failed to appear in court, Judge Tawfiq set Jan. 24 as the new date for the trial.

Charge sheet of murder suspects ready

Meanwhile, Prosecutor General Zubair Anyat told the Jordan Times that a list of accusations against four suspects allegedly involved in two separate murder cases was forwarded to

court and that a date for the first court session will be announced soon.

According to Mr. Anyat, the first case involves two men, aged 22 and 24, accused of stabbing to death Rabi' Tawfiq Odeh, owner of Al Tawfiq Grocery Shop in Jabal Amman and stealing JD 20 from the shop cash drawer.

Mr. Anyat said the formal charges against Mohammad M. A., 24, and Samer R.H., 22, include theft and premeditated murder.

The second case, Mr. Anyat said, involves two men aged 20 and 22, who stand accused of strangling Huson Almis, 80, in her apartment in Marka and stealing her jewellery.

Wa'el M. G. and Mustafa K. M. were apprehended by police the same day after a jewellery shop owner informed the authorities that two men tried to sell him jewellery without a receipt.

"After the shop owner refused to purchase the jewellery, the two men (defendants) told him what they had done to Mrs. Almis," Mr. Anyat said.

"The shop owner then called the police to report the incident," he added.

The defendants are charged with premeditated murder and theft, he said.

According to Mr. Anyat, the defendants in both murder cases will be informed of the charge sheet Tuesday.

Orthodox community demands reform

By Ramadan Rawashdeh
Special to the Jordan Times

FUHEIS — The Greek Orthodox leadership in Jerusalem Monday came under fire from a leading member of the Orthodox community in Fuheis, west of Amman, who accused the Jerusalem-based Greek Orthodox Patriarch, Demetrius, of practising dictatorship in financial and administrative affairs and neglecting the interests of the Arab community in Palestine and Jordan.

Fawzi Tueimeh, deputy or the Balqa governorate and a Fuheis resident, charged that "the religious education and cultural affairs of the estimated 50,000 strong Arab Orthodox community in Palestine and Jordan lie in the hands of a single man: Demetrius, who has been persistently ignoring the community's requests for reform," charged.

Addressing a press conference, Dr. Tueimeh

warned that unless the Orthodox leadership in Jerusalem responds to the Arab community's demands, community members might search for a substitute leadership and establish a separate Orthodox society, totally independent from the Orthodox Patriarchate.

"The Greek Orthodox leadership and the community should work out a strategy for dealing with the coming crucial stage in the region and for stopping the deterioration in the relationship between the religious leadership in Jerusalem and the parishes in Fuheis," said Dr. Tueimeh.

The relationship between the community in Palestine and Jordan on the one hand and the Patriarchate in Jerusalem on the other has over the past decades been characterised by tension, largely because the Patriarchate has been neglecting the Orthodox community's rights and due to absence

of a national sense of belonging to the Arab region on the Patriarchate's part, said Dr. Tueimeh.

In reviewing the community's demands, Dr. Tueimeh said that the Patriarchate in Jerusalem should help raise the living conditions of the local priests, settle the church's debts, which were caused by the building of a modern school in Fuheis, and enforce the 1958 law, which gives the local Arab priests wider authorities in the church's affairs.

In the absence of the Patriarch's efforts, the community in Fuheis has taken the initiative towards building a modern church and schools and in creating a new local society that would spearhead reforms, said Dr. Tueimeh.

He said these efforts were at first welcomed by Demetrius who later went back on his pledges to finance the school and the church projects.

In the light of these developments, he added, the local Fuheis Orthodox community held a conference on Nov. 18 of last year to discuss the situation and to issue a call on the Patriarchate to honour its pledges for reform and for funding the local church's projects, but has received no favourable response, according to Dr. Tueimeh.

Instead, he said, the Patriarchate has taken a series of arbitrary measures against the local priests in Fuheis, cutting off their salaries and refusing any meeting with them to discuss their grievances.

He told the press conference that the community has sent memoranda to His Majesty King Hussein, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, explaining that the Fuheis community was moving to achieve reforms and gain their rights.

AQABA (Petra) — The Ministry of Youth pays special attention to the needs of men and women aged between 15 and 24, who account for 25 per cent of the total population, Majed Qeisat, secretary general of the ministry said Monday.

Mr. Qeisat, who was addressing the second day of a three-day meeting on the role of municipal councils in local development, said that in view of the great number of youths in Jordan, there is an urgent need for concerned institutions, including local councils, to guide the young and direct their potentials towards useful work.

Meeting urges measures to cater for the needs of the youth

He said that caring for the youth and finding solutions to their problems are a national responsibility which the ministry is always seeking to fulfil.

Unless the youth are accorded appropriate care, they are bound to become "instruments of destruction rather than construction in their society," said Mr. Qeisat, who added that the concerned authorities, including clubs and cultural

centres, ought to draw up and execute national programmes aimed at helping the youth to fulfil their aspirations and serve their nation.

Zuheir Khalifeh, director general of the Cities and Villages Development Bank (CVDB), outlined the bank's activities and the credit which it has been providing to local councils since its establishment in 1972. He said that the

bank, whose capital amounts to nearly JD 30 million, gave 4,670 loans to various councils between 1972 and 1987. These loans were used to finance water, health, electricity and schools projects.

More recently, he said, the bank has been financing projects like building roads and carrying out development projects.

He said that the bank in 1995 granted 115 loans, totalling JD 4,857 million, to the country's local councils. He said Irbid governorate had the lion's share of the loans, receiving 44 loans amounting to JD 1,255 million.

SEMINARS AND LECTURES

* Seminar on the translated literature of children with the participation of Mona Uraikat, Walid Seif and Mohammad Al Dhaher at the Phoenix Gallery for Culture and Art at 6:30 p.m.
* Lecture (in Arabic) entitled "The Literature of Spying in the Modern Age" by Saleh Mursi at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Contemporary and Traditional Jewellery at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre, Shmeisani (Tel. 699141) (until Jan. 31).
* Water colours by Salam Kanaan at Riwaq Al Balqa Gallery, Fuheis (until Jan. 20).
* Paintings by Iraqi artist Hareth Muthanna entitled "Women and Horses" at the Royal Cultural Centre (until Jan. 18).

Murayama, Takemura reportedly agree to form new party in May

TOKYO (AFP) — Leaders of Japan's Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the New Party Sakigake, two of the three ruling coalition members, have agreed to form a new party in May in time for the next general election, the Yomiuri Shimbun said Monday.

The agreement between SDP Chairman Tomiichi Murayama and Sakigake leader Masayoshi Takemura called for the two parties to be united "by rallying as many locally operating parties and other political parties as possible," the newspaper said, quoting unnamed senior officials of both parties.

Mr. Murayama, the former prime minister, said in an interview Sunday that the creation of the new party "should preferably be in time for the next general

election," the newspaper said.

Mr. Murayama and Mr. Takemura agreed the two parties, if left unchanged, would be defeated in the next election, caught between the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the main opposition New Frontier Party, it said.

The LDP is the largest force in the ruling coalition. Its president, Ryutaro Hashimoto, became prime minister Thursday, replacing Mr. Murayama.

The new party is likely to be launched in early May, after the expected parliamentary approval of the year to March 1997 budget, the Yomiuri said. No election has yet been scheduled, but it is widely believed they will be called some time after the budget is approved.

The SDP and Sakigake will shortly launch a bilateral consultative body, as they agreed on Jan. 7, the paper said.

The parties will then set up a "new party preparation council" to work out the head of the new party, its political ideals, major policies and the name of the party, it said.

Meanwhile a newspaper poll published Monday showed popular support for the newly-formed cabinet of prime minister Hashimoto stood at 61 per cent, the second such poll to show widespread support for the new government.

The approval rating in the Asahi Shimbun's poll was much higher than the 35 per cent accorded to the cabinet of Mr. Murayama, in the newspaper's July 1994 poll immediately after Mr. Murayama took office.

A separate poll published by the Mainichi Shimbun Sunday put public support for the Hashimoto cabinet at 59 per cent.

The Asahi Shimbun said it interviewed 1,553 eligible voters across Japan on Saturday and Sunday and 75 per cent responded.

Only 20 per cent disapproved of the new administration, while 19 per cent did not answer, the Asahi poll showed.

More than half — 58 per cent — said they expected Mr. Hashimoto to display strong leadership. The former trade minister was known as a tough negotiator in trade talks with the United States.

Mr. Hashimoto's appointment marked the return of an LDP prime minister for the first time in two and a half years.

U.S. veterans of Korean War reportedly alive in the North

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korean newspapers carried front page reports Monday that 10 U.S. servicemen captured in the 1950-53 Korean War were still alive in the Communist North, but the U.S. military said it knew of no prisoners.

"To our knowledge there are no surviving Americans being held against their will as POWs in any nation in which we were previously engaged in hostilities," U.S. 8th Army command spokesman Jim Coles told AFP.

Military sources here, however, said it was possible that some of an estimated 25 to 27 American prisoners who refused repatriation at the end of the war were still alive and living in North Korea.

"They would be at least in their 60s now," the source said, adding that some were known to have died since 1953, and a few others had filtered back to the United States in the 1960s and 1970s via third countries.

A headline report in the mass circulation Chosun Daily said 10 U.S. soldiers were still in the North, and a Yonhap News Agency report quoted a South Korean official referring to "some American servicemen" living there more than 40 years after the war.

The Chosun Daily implied that North Korea had tried to use the 10 as a bargaining chip to speed up the opening of Washington-Pyongyang diplomatic ties in just-ended talks in Hawaii between U.S. and North Korean officials over the repatriation of POW remains.

"To my knowledge no such request by the North has been made," Mr. Coles said of the Chosun bargaining chip report.

"Two American soldiers who apparently fought in the Korean War acted in a North Korean film called 'Wolmi-Do Island' produced by the North's February 8 (movie company) in 1982," Yonhap quoted a South

Korean official as saying.

However, the official said it was "unlikely" that any Americans were being kept against their will, and that most had settled down in North Korea teaching English after marrying Korean women.

The South Korean Foreign Ministry issued a statement denying the parts of the newspaper report that implied "secret" talks were underway between Washington and Pyongyang that might have involved the 10 survivors.

"South Korea and the United States continue to stick to the position that improvement in Washington-Pyongyang ties should be made in parallel and in harmony with the improvement of inter-Korean relations," Yim Sung-Joon said.

Mr. Yim, director general of the ministry's American Affairs Bureau, also said neither government had discussed the issue of Americans living in the North.

More than 2,000 Americans were listed as MIA (missing in action) at the end of the Korean conflict, but those prisoners who elected to stay behind and refused repatriation are not on the MIA list, Mr. Coles clarified.

Last week's meeting in Honolulu ended during the weekend without agreement on a further meeting, 8th Army officials said here.

The officials were unable to confirm South Korean reports that the MIA talks, which have the blessing of Seoul, had "ruptured."

South Korea last year released Kim Son-Myeong, an elderly North Korean POW held since the war, dubbed by Amnesty International the world's longest serving prisoner of conscience.

The South said he had not been released previously because he had refused to renounce communism.

Colombian drug baron's escape revives extradition issue with U.S.

BOGOTA (AFP) — The stunning escape of a Cali drug baron from a maximum-security prison last week threatens to further strain relations with the United States and could revive the controversial issue of extradition.

The issue may come up during U.S. CIA Director John Deutch's meetings here Monday with President Ernesto Samper, the foreign affairs and defence ministers and the national police chief.

The one-day trip, planned since November, is part of ongoing contact between the two countries' intelligence organisations, especially those dealing with drug-trafficking and organised crime.

But it appears to have taken on new urgency with the embarrassing escape Thursday of Jose Santacruz Londono, reputedly the third-in-command of the Cali cocaine cartel, from the La Picota Maximum-Security Prison south of Bogota.

Mr. Deutch will likely use this visit to reexamine bilateral strategies to fight drug-trafficking, including U.S. aid to modernise Colombia's penal system and strengthen its anti-drug effort.

The two countries hold differing views on the drug scourge: The United States accuses Colombia, the world's leading producer of cocaine, of being soft on drug-traffickers and calls for harsher punishment.

Colombia says the United States, the world's biggest consumer of cocaine, is lax in its efforts to reduce drug consumption and control the production and sale of chemicals used to make illegal narcotics.

And despite the 1991 approval of a new constitution that expressly forbids extradition of Colombian nationals sought by foreign prosecutors, Washington regularly revives its call for extradition of alleged drug-traffickers, especially after incidents like the Santacruz escape.

But this time the situation has taken on new gravity since the escape occurred on the eve of the controversial annual U.S. certification of Colombia's anti-drug policy, which brings economic aid that could be suspended if Washington decides Bogota has not lived up to its pledged efforts.

Mr. Samper has reiterated that "with or without certification, Colombia will maintain the fight against narco-trafficking."

He also points out that his country has dedicated more than \$1 billion a year to the battle, in contrast with \$15 million or \$20 million earmarked by the United States.

For his part, Colombia's crusading anti-drug prosecutor Alfonso Valdivieso, who masterminded the capture of the Cali cartel leadership in 1995, raised the extradition issue in a published interview Sunday.

"Extradition should not be a taboo subject," he was quoted as saying in the daily El Tiempo.

Asked about Washington's latest request to revive extradition to the United States, the attorney general replied: "I consider that the conditions for its viability, from the point of view of reestablishment, are very precarious, and consequently it seems it would be an ineffective force at this moment."

Instead, he said, Colombia should concentrate on improving its judicial system and security.

Mr. Santacruz, 52, apparently slipped out of the prison in an official-looking vehicle and remains at large. The prison director and head of the national prison system were fired.

Colombia's army and police are combing the country for Mr. Santacruz, and the government has posted a \$2 million reward for information leading to his capture.

The escape came as another setback for Mr. Samper, who has been fighting allegations that Colombian drug lords pumped \$6 million into his 1994 presidential campaign. A congressional panel cleared him of any wrongdoing last month.

Colombia's much-heralded crackdown on drug-trafficking took another blow late Saturday when gunmen killed the director of a maximum-security prison near the southwest city of Cali.

Indonesian rebels free hostage temporarily

JAKARTA (R) — Separatist rebels in Indonesia's remote Irian Jaya province temporarily released one of seven European hostages Monday to convey details of the kidnappers' demands, Indonesia's armed forces spokesman said.

The official Antara News Agency quoted Brigadier-General Suwarno Adiwijoyo as saying that German Frank Mombert, released earlier, must return to the rebels' camp in the jungles of Irian Jaya, Indonesia's half of New Guinea Island.

"Mombert was lent by the rebels after they received food and medicine from the military this morning," Brig. Suwarno was quoted as saying. "He was asked to explain the various matters regarding the demands by the hostages. After that, he has to return to the hostage site."

It was not clear when he had to return.

Earlier, Irian Jaya military spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Maulud Hidayat told Reuters Mr. Mombert was released after three Christian missionaries flew by helicopter to the area where the hostages were being held.

"German Frank Mombert was handed over to the missionaries by the rebels. He is now in Wamena for a medical check-up," he said by telephone from Jayapura, capital of Irian Jaya.

Col. Hidayat said the missionaries flew to an area near Mapundama — some 2,700 metres above sea level and 160 kilometres from the local town of Wamena — where the rebels held the hostages.

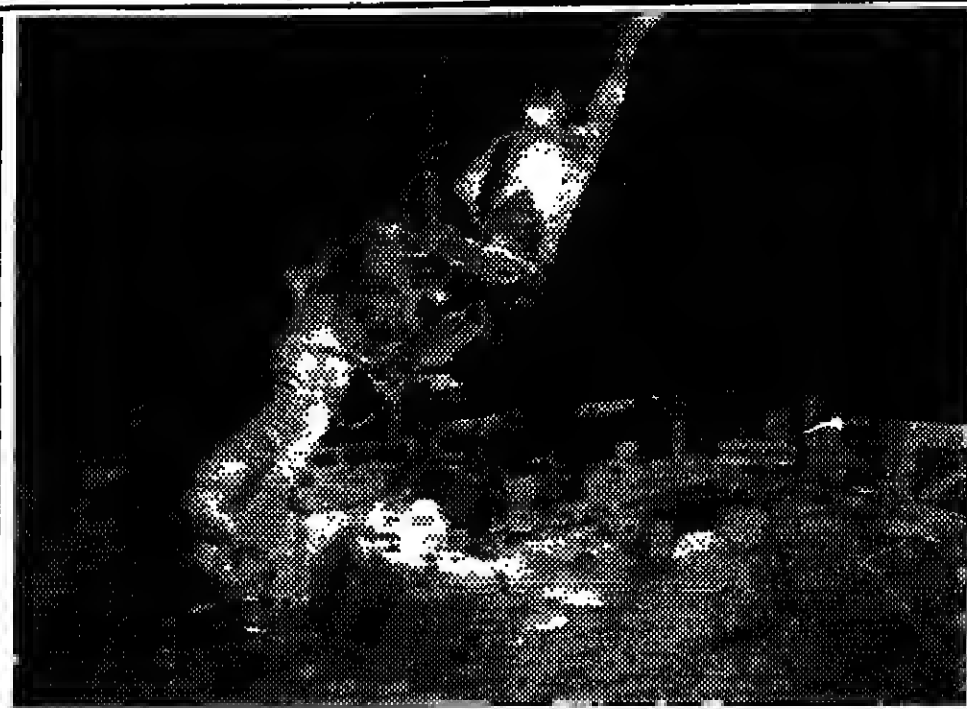
Mr. Mombert is a member of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). Guerrillas of the Free Papua Movement, or OPM, took 24 hostages Monday last week — seven of them Europeans — in Mapundama, about 300 kilometres from the Papua New Guinea border.

The other hostages include four Cambridge University graduates — Daniel Start, William Oates, Annette Van Der Kolk and Anna McIvor — and a Dutch WWF member, Mark Van Der Wal.

Dutch UNESCO (U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) staffer Martha Klein was also taken.

The guerrillas, operating in the jungle-covered highlands of one of the world's most remote regions, have released nine villagers but still hold the Europeans and eight Indonesians.

Antara said Christian missionaries met the guerrillas earlier Monday, although it did not provide details.



Shuttle Endeavour astronaut Daniel Barry (top) attaches a temporary equipment restraint device to the end of the robot arm as Leroy Chiao assists on the Portable Work Platform outside the shuttle cargo bay. The platform will be used for future missions in the construction of the international space station, set to start next year (Reuters photo)

Shuttle crew practices to build station

HOUSTON, Texas (AFP) — Astronauts aboard the U.S. space shuttle Endeavour tested equipment and technology to build a space station in the first space walk Monday of this nine-day mission, NASA announced.

Leroy Chiao and Daniel Barry began the space walk at 0540 GMT and stayed out for almost 6-1/2 hours. Another walk was planned later on the nine-day Endeavour mission, which started Thursday.

The main aim of the mission, which began Thursday, was to recover a Japanese satellite with a robotic arm and return it to Earth for study. It was set in orbit last March.

On Sunday the crew successfully launched a scientific satellite that was to conduct a series of experiments over 48 hours before being retrieved Tuesday.

In the space walk early Monday, the two astronauts tested a portable work station that future astronauts may use to help them cut down on time-wasting searches for materials and tools.

They also tested a system which should assist astronauts remain stable in space and repaired the installation system for a 100-kilo (220-pound) cord that will furnish electrical current to the station.

Another space walk has been scheduled for overnight Tuesday and should last 6-1/2 hours. Mr. Chiao is scheduled for that outing as well as a second astronaut, Winston Scott.

That walk will be to test space suits that the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) hopes will keep them warm in the bone-chilling cold of space.

China pledges to do away with lengthy detention without charge

BEIJING (AFP) — China is to abolish the present system of "custody for investigation" under which suspects are held for lengthy periods without charge, experts said Monday, but indicated that legal loopholes would remain.

Draft amendments to China's Criminal Practice Law (CPL) will "do away with the old practice of custody for investigation," said Wang Jiafu, director of the Centre of Human Rights Research under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS).

"We will strictly limit the use of detention" before charged to 72 hours, as stipulated in the CPL, to make the system "more democratic, more open and more modernised," Mr. Wang said, adding that the National People's Congress

was expected to pass the amendments in June or August.

However, he added that the period could be extended to a maximum of 30 days under three sets of circumstances — if a detainee refused to reveal his identity, if the individual was suspected of committing crimes nationwide or if he was a repeat offender.

Mr. Wang also said that the amendments to the CPL would not affect the system of "reform through labour," under which public security organs have the right to hand down administrative sentences of up to three years.

Liu Hainian, director of CASS's Law Institute, acknowledged that at present suspects were often held for lengthy periods of "custody for investigation"

because law enforcement agencies were unable to gather "decisive evidence" needed to press charges during the legally stipulated detention period.

However, he said that individuals were "illegally detained" in only a "very few" cases. He did not make clear under what circumstances exceeding the 72-hour limit were considered legal.

China's best-known dissident, Wei Jingsheng, was held incommunicado in detention from April 1994 and not formally charged until November 1995. He was sentenced to 14 years in prison in December after being found guilty in a secretive trial of conspiring to overthrow the government.

Roh gives no excuses for slush funds

SEOUL (Agencies) — Former South Korean President Roh Tae-Woo said Monday he would offer no excuses for taking money while in office, and told a court trying him for bribery he would accept any punishment.

In a statement presented to the court through his lawyer, Mr. Roh said the money he received from businessmen was "donations not related to favour or reward."

What was then viewed as funds used to run the country was now seen as dirty money, the statement said.

"This sovereign fund is now regarded as a corrupt accumulation of wealth that left injury to the pride of the nation and you citizens. I will take all responsibility and any punishment," he said.

Mr. Roh's statement said he would not submit to cross examination by his lawyer as expected.

The former military general, wearing a light blue prison uniform and white rubber shoes, is standing trial on charges of accepting 284 billion won (now equivalent to \$359 million) in kickbacks during his 1988-93 term.

His trial, along with eight businessmen and six former aides, began with a one-day session last month. Monday's court proceedings were the first since then.

The biggest trial in the nation's history is part of President Kim Young-Sam's anti-corruption campaign to "put history to

rights".

Mr. Roh argued that his political slush fund totalling well over \$600 million was "sovereign money that helped carry out state policies smoothly."

"I do not plan to provide any excuses or submit to cross examination by defence lawyers aimed at alleviating punishment," he said.

Mr. Roh's lawyer, Kim You-Hoo, said the court must determine if the funds were bribes or "money needed to govern the nation in accordance with practice and climate at the time."

Mr. Roh's surprise move confounded media expectations that he would put up a vigorous defence. Last month he told the court all his financial records had been destroyed.

Businessmen standing trial with Mr. Roh denied giving bribes to the former president, saying they just followed the established practice of "donating to political funds" regularly.

Among them are chairmen of Samsung Sagr.Ca groups and Daewoo Dwg.Ca groups.

The lawyer of Samsung Chairman Lee Kun-Hee described the money his client handed to Mr. Roh as "a pseudo-tax fund" to avoid ill-treatment by the government and keep his companies running. Mr. Lee said he left decisions on the "donations" to an aide.

Daewoo Chairman Kim Woo-Choon acknowledged giving 10 billion won (\$13 million) to Mr. Roh for 1992 parliamentary polls but said he was following a

"long-established tradition".

Mr. Roh arrived in the Seoul District Criminal Court by bus Monday from a detention centre where he has been held since his arrest on Nov. 16.

President Kim confessed last week he too accepted money, but stopped the practice when he became president.

South Korea's huge conglomerates, known as "chaebol", are creatures of government policy. A select group of businessmen were given cheap bank loans and big government contracts as a short cut to rapid industrialisation.

A second former President, Chun Doo Hwan, was indicted last Friday on charges of taking \$273 million in bribes. He has confessed to amassing an even larger slush fund than his successor Mr. Roh.

Meanwhile a growing number of politicians and MPs linked to South Korea's years of military rule are quietly withdrawing from public life after the jailing of ex-presidents Chun and Roh.

On Sunday a 69-year-old former MP who had been preparing to run in general elections in April, said he was retiring to make way for "competent young political aspirants."

Yoo Hak-Seong thanked those who had supported him and added: "I've already closed my district office."

Hot chilli sauce cools attacker's ardour

COLOMBO (R) — A 62-year-old Sri Lankan described as a would-be rapist fled in agony after his intended victim threw a bottle of chilli solution over his naked body, a newspaper said Monday. The 55-year-old woman caught the man full in the face and body "when he followed her contemplating his next move, still undressed, inflamed by his lust," the state-run Daily News said. The man, from the Ratnapura district, 80 kilometres southeast of Colombo, "remained several hours under water in great pain" before he was arrested by police.

8 Taiwan couples marry in \$1m lavatory

TAICHUNG, Taiwan (R) — Eight Taiwan couples got married inside a luxurious \$1 million public lavatory that one of the couples had designed and built. Bride Chin Chiu-Kuei designed the toilets, set in a public park in the central city of Taichung, and her groom, Lee Wong-Tsong, built them. "Since the bathroom is the creation of me and my husband it is very meaningful to us and therefore we decided to have our ceremony in here," Ms. Chin said. The couple said the lavatory, complete with elaborate decoration, had cost about \$1 million to build. Ms. Chiu and Mr. Lee also celebrated their engagement at the lavatory. They said they had chosen the unusual site for the festivities because it was the place everyone visits most often.

Mahathir plans Internet chat with Ramos, Arafat

KUALA LUMPUR (R) — Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad will meet Philippine President Fidel Ramos and PLO leader Yasser Arafat in "cyberspace" Wednesday, local Internet service provider Asia Connect said. Mr. Mahathir, who became the first head of government to go live on the Internet on Dec. 27, will hold a dialogue with the two leaders on Jan. 17, it said in a statement. "Mahathir will share honours with Arafat and Ramos as the first three heads of government in the world to hold a live interactive dialogue on the Internet," Asia Connect said. The three leaders will exchange views for about 10 minutes.

New-born baby found hours after abduction

LYON, France (AFP) — A two-day-old baby boy was snatched from a maternity clinic in the suburb of Vaulx-en-Velin near here Sunday, but was found safe and sound only hours later in the nearby home of a woman, police said. The baby had disappeared from his cot as his 26-year-old mother was taking a shower in a cubicle in the room in which she was nursing him. Police immediately launched a major operation to find the child, amid suspicions that it could have been taken by a woman who wanted a child. They said the baby had been found at a caravan occupied by a 45-year-old woman in the Lyon region. The woman, who lived alone, was described as a traveller who had settled down. The head of the clinic said the child, named Sofiane, was in good condition and had not been mistreated. Staff at the clinic were caring for him, he said. Police said they had been tipped off by an anonymous phone call. The head of the clinic had earlier said the baby's condition was "fragile" and that he needed constant attention.

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South seen as solid Republican in 1996 U.S. elections

MOBILE, Alabama (R) — Despite U.S. President Bill Clinton's continued edge in national opinion polls, political analysts say Republicans can count on a united front in the south, come election day. And in presidential politics, as the south goes, so goes the United States.

The mood among more than 1,000 delegates to the Southern Republican Leadership Conference, which ended here Sunday, was one of breezy self-assurance which the party's presidential front-runner, Bob Dole, expressed in succinct terms.

"I don't believe President Clinton will carry a single southern state, including Arkansas," the Senate majority leader boasted to a crowd of journalists and cheering supporters.

Mr. Clinton captured four southern states during his 1992 victory over George Bush. But this year, some believe the president will do little better than to take Arkansas, and perhaps Florida if he gets enough support from senior citizens grateful for his stand against Republican Medicare reforms.

Otherwise, political analysts say, the glowing optimism exuded by southern party members appears to be well-deserved.

"It'll be one surprised American citizen if Mr. Clinton wins any state in the old Confederacy or in the west," said Robert Norrell, a political historian at the University of Alabama.

The south has played a critical role in presidential politics since the 1930s, when it provided half the electoral votes needed to elect Franklin Delano Roosevelt to four straight terms. Since then, the region has been on the winning side each time a single party has captured all, or nearly all, of its electoral votes.

Earl and Merle Black, who are political science professors as well as brothers, point out in their book, *The Vital South*, that southern unity has favoured Republicans since 1972, with the sole exception of Jimmy Carter's 1976 victory.

The region could be even more important to the country's future in 1996, if the White House and Congress turn the November election into a policy referendum on how to balance the federal budget.

According to Republican National Committee co-chair Evelyn McPhail, the south and midwest are fast becoming a solid Republican corridor known among party strategists as "the L" because of its geographic shape.

The 1994 election that brought Republicans control of Congress for the first time in 40 years set off a wave of defections among Conservative southern Democrats. They now see the region's political future as belonging to Republicans like House Speaker Newt Gingrich of Georgia, Senate majority whip Trent Lott of Mississippi and House majority leader Dick Armey of Texas.

In Alabama alone, 23 elected Democrats have switched since the 1994 election, said Len Gavin, the state Republican Party's political director. The roster includes 10 judges who defected en masse less than a month ago, and U.S. Senator Richard Shelby, who endorsed Sen. Dole's candidacy at the convention here.

Party strategists say rank-and-file support in the south is organised around four groups of white voters: Evangelical Christians, landlords, shopkeepers and conservative talk radio listeners. Many of the party's strongest supporters are suburban transplants from northern states.

But also at play is a regional defiance of federal authority that is older than the Confederacy.

Meanwhile a wealthy political unknown is gaining on the frontrunner in the race for the 1996 Republican presidential nomination in two key states, according to polls out Sunday.

A survey by the Boston Globe daily showed Sen. Dole with 33 per cent of the vote in New Hampshire, a key early primary state, against 17 per cent for multi-millionaire Steve Forbes.

Analysts attribute Mr. Forbes' surge to an aggressive — and expensive — advertising campaign, funded by his massive personal wealth.

Fortune magazine, a rival publication to the candidate's flagship Forbes magazine, reported in its latest edition that his personal net worth totals about \$438.8 million.

In a long and critical profile, Fortune estimated the combined worth of Forbes Inc. holdings, mostly in media and real estate, at \$1.16 billion.

The 17 per cent "flat" tax that Forbes advocates in his campaign platform would reduce his own income taxes from their current 39 per cent rate, the magazine noted.

In the Jan. 7-10 Boston Globe survey of 275 Republican voters, 44 per cent of those who said they would vote for Sen. Dole said they could change their minds in the five weeks running up to the New Hampshire primary on Feb. 20.

Eleven per cent gave the nod to arch-conservative commentator Pat Buchanan while the six other major candidates trailed with five per cent or less.

There was also bad news in Delaware for Sen. Dole, the Kansas senator on his third White House bid at age 72.

A news journal poll showed Sen. Dole and Mr. Forbes nearly neck-and-neck at 30 and 29 per cent respectively for that mid-Atlantic state's Feb. 24 primary.

2nd North Korean defects in Zambia

SEOUL (AFP) — A second North Korean has defected to the South Korean embassy in Zambia, Yonhap News Agency said Monday, as Seoul expressed optimism that the first, a diplomat's wife, would travel to the South soon.

"She is getting clearance (to come to Seoul) from the Zambian government," a Foreign Ministry official told AFP, referring to Choi Soo-Bong, wife of a third secretary who sought asylum in the South Korean embassy in Lusaka last week.

The North charged that Mrs. Choi, 36, had been kidnapped and protested strongly to the Zambian government.

"I am sure she will come soon," the Foreign Ministry official said. He declined to confirm a Yonhap report

that Mrs. Choi would arrive in Seoul Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Yonhap said a North Korean intelligence officer in Lusaka, identified as Yoo Jae-Do, 29, had applied for asylum a day after Mrs. Choi's defection.

The two were turned over to the South Korean embassy Monday after undergoing an inquiry by Zambian and U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees officials to confirm that the move was of their own free will, the agency said.

Neither North Korea nor the Foreign Ministry here has made any mention of a second defector.

North Korea maintains a strong embassy in Zambia, although its presence has been overshadowed by growing economic ties between South Korea and the African nation.



Socialist Jorge Sampaio waves from the balcony of a Lisbon hotel after winning the Portuguese presidential elections Sunday. Sampaio was swept to victory with some 54 per cent of the vote and will replace fellow Socialist Mario Soares as the Portuguese head of state (Reuters photo)

New president rides Portugal's left-wing tide

LISBON (AFP) — Portugal looked forward Monday to the prospect of undiluted socialism into the next century after Jorge Sampaio coasted a resurgent left-wing tide all the way to the presidency.

"Portugal turns left" headlined the *Diario de Noticias* daily under a picture of the new president, underlining that the Socialists had also swept to success in legislative elections in October.

The victim of both the ballots was Anibal Cavaco Silva who had headed three centre-right governments under outgoing Socialist President Mario Soares. Earlier the right had also lost municipal and European elections.

Diario de Noticias said Mr. Sampaio's victory by seven percentage points was "a clear and unequivocal success" which "helped Portugal turn to the left."

The Lisbon daily *Publico* said that for the first time Portuguese voters had given the country a president, government and (parliamentary) majority "of the same political colour."

"Cavaco Silva has suffered a heavy electoral defeat for the first time in 10 years," the independent daily wrote under the headline "the end of Cavacism."

It said the earlier defeats, while shaking his Social Democrat Party, had not defeated it, but this time was different.

"In preferring Sampaio to Cavaco Silva, voters, more than just inflicting a personal defeat, have signed the death warrant for Cavacism," it added.

Diario Economico said the election victory did not perturb the markets.

"Although the three principal personalities in the state hierarchy are now Socialist, the different economic elements contacted by *Diario Economico* have shown clear signs of confidence," it wrote. Even the two Lisbon daily sports papers led their Monday editions with the Socialist victory, one noting that Mr. Sampaio supported Sporting Lisbon football club.

Mr. Cavaco Silva could take comfort however from having reduced the Socialists' share of the vote from legislative elections in October.

His score of 46.17 per cent was three per cent higher than that obtained then by the classic and nationalist right.

Mr. Sampaio's 53.83 per cent was higher than that which Mr. Soares won for his first term in 1986 but well below his record 1991 score of 70.43 per cent. Abstention reached 33.62 per cent.

The election statistics also showed a north-south divide, with the north and the islands of Madeira and Azores largely voting for Cavaco Silva and the south opting for Mr. Sampaio.

The former prime minister was meanwhile gracious in defeat, saying Mr. Sampaio's success as president would be important for the country. He would not say if he planned to retire from politics.

Mr. Sampaio is due to be sworn in on March 9 in succession to Mr. Soares, but does not intend to move into the official presidential residence. Instead he plans to remain in the Lisbon house where he lives with his wife and two children.

Dhaka opposition wants arms crackdown halted

DHAKA (R) — Bangladeshi opposition parties urged authorities Monday to stop the army's crackdown on illegal arms possession ahead of next month's general election, saying it was a guise to detain government opponents.

"Under the pretext of helping retrieve illegal arms and explosives, the army is being used against opposition activists," the Jatiya Party, Bangladesh's second biggest opposition group, said in a statement.

"We demand army soldiers be pulled back immediately...so they are not made part of a conspiracy," it said after holding a meeting with 11 smaller opposition parties on Sunday.

In the statement, made available to Reuters Monday, the 12 parties vowed to "boycott and resist" the election unless it was supervised by a neutral caretaker administration.

Sheikh Hasina, chief of the main opposition Awami

League, reiterated in a statement published Monday that her party would never participate in the Feb. 15 poll while Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia remained in office.

A general election would be "colourless and uninteresting" without the participation of all parties, Chief Election Commissioner Justice A.K.M. Sadeque told Reuters.

"I am holding the elections under painful circumstances only as an obligation to uphold constitutional provisions for which I have taken oath," he said.

He said he had postponed the election to give the "battling opposition" and government to end their differences.

"Everyday I was expecting the differences would be over. Now time has become so scarce that I'm not sure how the opposition could be accommodated in the election if they want to join it at this stage."

Yeltsin shocks liberals by naming hawk as top aide

MOSCOW (R) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin named a hardliner as chief of his personal administration Monday, alarming liberals with a surprise appointment five months before a presidential election.

The presidential press service said Nikolai Yegorov, sacked by Mr. Yeltsin as nationalities minister after mishandling a Chechen hostage-taking raid in southern Russia last June, had replaced liberal Sergei Filatov who quit the influential post last week.

Mr. Yegorov is widely seen by the Russian media as a hawk. He commanded the Russian military operation in rebel Chechnya at its fiercest stage at the end of 1994.

"A dove has gone and a hawk has come," Nikolai Bodnaruk, deputy editor of the liberal *Izvestia* broadsheet, told Reuters. "It sends shivers down my spine and creates an impression of gloomy times coming for Russia."

"We have seen what he did in the Caucasus," Mr. Bodnaruk said in a reference to Mr. Yegorov's beligerent support of the military operation in Chechnya in which thousands of civilians, Russian soldiers and rebel fighters were killed.

Mr. Bodnaruk saw the appointment of Mr. Yegorov as a concession by Mr. Yeltsin to the new lower house of parliament, the State Duma, which meets for the first time Tuesday.

The Duma is dominated by Mr. Yeltsin's Communist foes and also features a powerful nationalist group.

"The Duma has made no demands on Mr. Yeltsin yet and he has already overfilled his plan," said Mr. Bodnaruk in a clear reference to recent changes in the government.

Andrei Kozirev, widely seen as pro-Western and a liberal, has been replaced as foreign minister by former foreign intelligence chief, Yevgeny Primakov. He is

seen as more assertive and less friendly to the West.

Mr. Yegorov's appointment was announced the same day Russian troops stormed a southern village in which some 200 Chechen rebels were holding about 100 hostages.

Mr. Yegorov, 45, was made Mr. Yeltsin's personal aide on national policy after he lost the post of nationalities minister.

The departure of Mr. Filatov might disrupt what many analysts see as a carefully-crafted balance between liberals and conservatives in Mr. Yeltsin's inner circle of personal aides, many of them carrying more weight than most ministers.

The head of administration, or chief of staff, has huge influence in the Kremlin and the post's importance will increase if Mr. Yeltsin decides to run for re-election in the June 16 presidential election.

Interfax News Agency said Mr. Filatov could join Mr. Yeltsin's election team, likely to be headed by the conservative First Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Soskovets.

It said Mr. Yeltsin's first aide, conservative Viktor Ilyushin, and his sports minister and tennis partner, Shamil Tarpiashchev, could also be in the election team.

There was no independent confirmation of the Interfax report and Mr. Yeltsin has said he would announce his decision in February on whether to run.

Most politicians and experts say Mr. Yeltsin will stand despite recent health problems and try to present himself as the only person capable of preventing Communist revanchism.

An apparent shift towards more conservative figures appeared to contradict this theory and reflect Mr. Yeltsin's traditional esteem for personal loyalty. It could also signal an intention to use more force to bring rebel Chechnya to heel, analysts say.

Berlusconi stands trial at height of Italy crisis

MILAN (R) — Former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi goes on trial for corruption Wednesday, casting a long shadow over his future at the high table of Italian politics.

The trial will pit crusading anti-graft magistrates against the businessman-turned-politician who says he is the target of a campaign to wreck his ambitions to lead Italy again.

Mr. Berlusconi, his brother Paolo, and nine others, have been charged in connection with bribes paid to tax inspectors by companies in his Fininvest empire in return for lenient audits.

He has denied all knowledge of payments by four Fininvest companies totalling 380 million lire (\$242,000) but investigators portray him as a man with a sharp eye for detail and allege he must have known about the bribes.

Defence lawyers say the payments were the result of extortion by rapacious tax police.

Mr. Berlusconi is not expected to attend the opening day. The trial is expected to be adjourned shortly after it starts.

Regardless of the outcome of the trial, which might last for many months, the fact it is taking place at all raises a question mark over the political future of a man who still has his sights on returning to high office.

Mr. Berlusconi rode to power in a general election in March 1994 promising a new start after a huge scandal engulfed the old order, breaking the mould of Italian politics.

An investigation into his affairs contributed to the fall of his government only seven months later.

The media magnate's lawyers have mounted a strenuous campaign to delay the trial.

His fate was sealed after Italy's highest court, the Court of Cassation, in November turned down an appeal to have the hearing moved to the nearby town of Brescia.

The prospect of the trial already appears to have dimmed Mr. Berlusconi's hopes of an early return to the premier's office.

After repeatedly trying to bring about the demise of his successor Lamberto Dini and forge early elections, Mr. Berlusconi says he is now open to the idea of a broad-based government coalition to push through institutional reforms.

Bhutto seeks Canadian help to prevent nuclear race in South Asia

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto used a visit by Canadian counterpart Jean Chretien to speak of India's perceived nuclear threat, but still promised Pakistan's cooperation in eliminating weapons of mass destruction.

Pakistan was disturbed by reports that India was preparing to conduct its second nuclear test, Ms. Bhutto said at a banquet she hosted for Mr. Chretien late Sunday.

She urged Canada to use its influence to dissuade India from conducting a follow up to its first experimental nuclear explosion in 1974.

New Delhi has denied a New York Times report last month that quoted U.S. experts as saying India was planning to conduct a new test.

Ms. Bhutto, who was to hold more talks with Mr. Chretien Monday, also expressed concern about India's missile development programme.

"Pakistan can not remain immune to the relentless pursuit of missile development in our neighbourhood," she said.

India and Pakistan have fought three wars since their independence in 1947. Their territorial dispute over Kashmir caused two of the conflicts.

Pakistan has repeatedly warned New Delhi against developing its Prithvi missile, which has a range of about 250 kilometres (150 miles) and is believed to be capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

It suspects the missile is being developed to target Pakistan.

Ms. Bhutto said Pakistan favoured non-proliferation in South Asia. "We will work

with Canada to prevent the proliferation of such weapons of mass destruction in our region. But the regime of non-proliferation must be equitable and non-discriminatory," she added.

Pakistan, which Western experts believe is capable of developing nuclear weapons if it does not already have them, has said it will sign the nuclear non proliferation treaty (NPT) if India does so at the same time.

Mr. Chretien who visited India prior to his two-day visit to Pakistan, said Canada had not raised the question of a possible Indian nuclear test but he had urged New Delhi to sign the NPT.

Referring to Kashmir, Ms. Bhutto said Pakistan was willing to accept any mechanism to settle the dispute peacefully in accordance with U.N. resolutions, calling for a plebiscite in the Himalayan state.

She also backed U.N. efforts for a broad-based and representative government in Afghanistan.

Mr. Chretien, without touching the issues of Kashmir and nuclear tests, said Canada wanted peace in the world. He expressed the hope that Canada-Pakistan relations would grow after his visit.

Mr. Chretien's "Team Canada" delegation includes 150 business people and investors. They signed a series of agreements Monday at a round table attended by the two prime ministers.

The agreements relate to projects in energy, agro-based industry, telecommunications, transport, education and science and technology.

Spy-charged Polish premier returns to work

WARSAW (R) — Poland's Prime Minister Jozef Oleksy, fighting allegations that he had spied for Russia, resumed work Monday after a week-long holiday, the government spokeswoman said.

"The prime minister is back at work and has gone to meet the president to discuss the current political situation," Aleksandra Jakubowska told Reuters.

She denied a report in Monday's edition of the influential *Rzeczpospolita* daily that Mr. Oleksy would probably resign this week following last month's accusations by the outgoing interior minister that he had passed secret information to KGB agents.

"There is no information that the prime minister is going to submit the resignation of his cabinet," Ms. Jakubowska said.

Mr. Oleksy, a former senior Communist, says the allegations were fabricated by supporters of former President Lech Walesa to discredit the ex-Communist Party after its member Aleksander Kwasniewski won presidential elections last November.

He has admitted a friendship with a Russian diplomat who later turned out to be a spy, but said their contacts were entirely innocent.

The Warsaw military prosecutors' office, responsible for spying cases, said it would decide this month whether to launch a formal inquiry into the case after it gets more evidence from the security service.

The affair, which has led to speculation that the Polish Peasant Party (PSL) may break away from its governing coalition with Mr. Oleksy's larger ex-Communist Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), has undermined the divisions in Polish society.

According to a recent opinion poll, more than 50 per cent of Poles think Mr. Oleksy should resign or take a temporary leave of absence while 32 per cent think he should stay in office.

It is indispensable to fight against inequality, discrimination, and poverty," he said.

He said his government will immediately launch an offensive against crime in Guatemala, where there are an average of eight killings, two kidnappings, and thirteen car thefts daily.

Using unusually strong language, Mr. Arzu said he would weed out corrupt elements of the security forces who are involved in crime rackets.

"No longer will the Guatemalan state be used to cover up crime," he said.

Mr. Oleksy's leftist government of ex-Communists and a Peasant Party is demanding that the prime minister step down, saying his presence in the cabinet is an obstacle to a proper explanation of the accusations.

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GEORGE S. HAWATMEH

Editorial and advertising offices:

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University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.

Telephones: 684311, 699634

Telex: 21497 ALRAI JO

Facsimile: 696183

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The vision for Iraq

FIVE YEARS ago today, the U.S.-led Western coalition started its air bombardment of Baghdad as it launched the disastrous Gulf War to force Iraq out of Kuwait.

At the time, Jordan took a firm stand against the war, but at the same time unequivocally stressed its rejection of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. The Kingdom's position stemmed from its belief that the liberation of Kuwait should be achieved through peaceful means and by the Arab countries themselves. Globalising the crisis, Jordan said then, would have negative repercussions whose reverberations would haunt the whole region for years to come.

Five years after the war, the whole region is still grappling with the legacy of the Gulf War. The economies of the rich countries of the area remain hostage to huge foreign debts. But this by far is not the most painful consequence of the Gulf War. The most agonising consequence is the suffering and the indignation with which 18 million Iraqis are still living.

Just as it took the lead in urging a peaceful solution to the Gulf crisis five years ago, and at a tremendous economic and political cost, Jordan is now spearheading real and genuine efforts to lift the shadow of misery from the Iraqi people.

The pillar of the Kingdom's policy on Iraq is that its people should suffer no more and that the integrity of Iraq's territories should not be compromised. Jordan is saying that the Iraqis should move beyond the current bleak stage in their history. That they should do by getting together and working out a plan of action for saving their country, without the interference of any and with no commitment to anything other than the unity of their country and the achievement of democracy, pluralism and human rights that will guarantee the rights of all components of the Iraqi society.

Jordan is offering no pre-made recipe for the future of the political system in Iraq. But it has a vision for an Iraq in which Iraqis can lead a dignified life free from political oppression and the fear of war, death and destruction.

This vision does not amount to interference in the internal affairs of Iraq as those imprisoned in the narrowness of their personal ambitions and the limitedness of their foresight propagate. These are the nineties of the 20th century, not the middle ages. And at the end of the 20th century, human life, rights and dignity are—or should be—above all political considerations. The world has come to agree that when it comes to human rights and protecting people from oppression, political borders do not count. A call for ensuring the human rights of a neighbouring and a brethren people is not interference in the affairs of others. It is a reflection of a genuine concern for the people, nothing more, nothing less.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER in Al Mashreq weekly described the coming peace between the Palestinians and the Jewish state as a bloody peace due to Israel's terrorist activities against the Palestinians, who have been fighting off the occupation. Commenting on the assassination of Yahya Ayyash, Fuad Abu Hijleh said that rather than a cold peace, the Palestinians should expect a bloody peace in which more blood on both sides will shed, largely due to Israel's acts of terrorism and assassinations. Contrary to what many had believed in terms of the ability of the Palestinians and the Israelis to co-exist peacefully, experience has proved that positive interaction between the two sides is impossible because the Jewish state is determined to cling hard to its old ideologies regardless of the agreements with the Arabs, said the writer. The killing of Fathi Shaqaqi and Yahya Ayyash was the latest act of terrorism that explicitly exposed to the whole world the real nature of the Israeli society, said the writer. A state that mobilises its forces and secret agents to launch assassinations against individuals, added the writer, is clearly not oriented towards peace.

Five years after the Gulf war: the piracy persists

TODAY'S FIFTH anniversary of the start of the second Gulf war in January 1991 is an opportunity to take stock of this region, and to ask whether the war had a positive or negative effect on the well-being of most Arabs and other Middle Easterners. I believe that the Middle East today is just as unstable, vulnerable and violent as it was five years ago, if not more so. The points and protagonists of Mideastern violence have shifted around slightly, like a flo or cold that migrates from one part of the body to another. More troublesome is the fact that the most basic underlying problems that prompted the emotionalism and intensity of the 1990/91 crisis — poverty, social inequity, political autocracy, nationalistic indignity, a penchant for state violence — are all either unaddressed or unresolved; in most cases, they even may have worsened.

Let us start in the Gulf area. Saudi Arabia's finances are significantly tighter than they were five years ago, its reserves have dwindled sharply and its internal political tensions are becoming more acute. It witnesses increasingly larger scale arrests of domestic critics, a more active international network of Saudi critics and some bombings and deaths within the country. Neighbouring Qatar recently had a palace coup, and the former emir is still hovering in the region seeking to regain his throne. Bahrain has suffered several years of slowly escalating tension and violence, resulting in large-scale arrests, some deaths and a considerably heightened and institutionalised degree of political stress. Kuwait is liberated militarily, but it remains a fragile and brittle place, a ghost of its old self. It has returned to its profligate ways that depend on a massive foreign expatriate labour force and the protection of foreign defence forces, while large-scale capital flight has become a new hallmark of this once pioneering Arab land. Oman feverishly seeks but only slowly finds indigenous and foreign private sector investors who can gradually replace the government as the economic pump primer, while internal politics remain haunted by the arrest of scores of alleged Islamist activists in 1994. The United Arab Emirates, having learned the lesson of Dubai, seems to have decided to make a slow shift from a country into a country club, complete with golf courses, sports tournaments, 24-hour shopping centres, and every physical convenience and emotional pleasure that could possibly be required by credit-card-carrying deodorant salesmen plying the London-Singapore route.

The Kurds in northern Iraq continue to live in their very difficult political Twilight Zone in which they appear and disappear on the global stage primarily in response to the self-gratification instincts and short-term strategic objectives of others who use them, reward them, feed them, forget them, discard them and then go through the cycle once again. Whether fighting each other, the governments of Iraq or Turkey, or the fading memories and promises of the Western powers, the Kurds remain awkward wards of the United States, England and others who put together the 1990 Cash Register Coalition. Turkey experiences ever more serious challenges from Islamists and Kurds to the legacy of the Atatürkist idea of a Euro-style secular nation-state, and its Euro-oriented elite is numbed by the prospect of becoming the first NATO member to have a government headed by an Islamist.

Around the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa, conditions continue to deteriorate steadily, as once strategic lands are transformed into zones of neglect. Somalia has made the transition from former ally of the USA and the USSR to peripheral state, and now to invisible land; it has fractured into several states, fiefs, militias, regions and river valleys, a shocking and frustrating reminder of a possible fate that awaits others amongst us who fail to grasp the complex rules of modern statehood. Yemen — that proud land of ancient Arab civilisations and queens — slips further and further into self-flagellating chaos and weakness, having united, separated, fought a wasteful civil war, united again, and then fought a mini-war with that awesome new threat to the Arab Nation — Eritrea. Sudan suffers apparently perpetual civil strife, and is close to joining Somalia as an invisible land, a place that exists mainly in memory, because it does not seem to matter to anyone other than the Sudanese. Djibouti is strangely silent these days, for reasons that only history will explain to us one day, when we write and read the full tales about the confluence of European imperial audacity, small oew Oriental states, big ports and exotic military bases manned by young Euro-troops in cute flat hats and neatly ironed khaki shorts.

In North Africa, the situation is slightly better. Algeria and Egypt — once giants of modern Arab history, potential future giants of the Arab economy — remain snared in their own self-made domestic political violence and economic pain; their predicaments are aggravated by assassination attempts against their presidents and senior offi-

cials, stubborn foreign economic dependence and a penchant by both the government and opposition to use violence. Both countries have tried to resort to elections to signal their desire to move out of the darkness and into the light, but they have only managed to accentuate the darkness through elections of unconvincing credibility. Morocco slowly suffers the chronic pains of a great civilization that has been largely stumped by the ways of the modern world; consequently, sadly, this rich culture that once transmitted knowledge, law and enlightenment to the European lands to its north is most notorious among the northern industrialised states today for its problematic new status as one of the world's most important drug-producing states. Libya is continuously perplexing to the whole world, for despite its status as a banned and outlawed nation it refuses to disappear or conform; it stagnates internally, suffers the pains of its own top-heavy mismanagement, and makes confounding gestures to Palestinians, Egyptians and other Arabs that remind us of its continued existence, though its purpose and relevance remain less clear. Tunisia receives positive reports from the IMF about its macro-economic progress, and negative reports from international human rights groups about its regressive domestic political situation; this land that once gave the world important centres of human civilisation like Qairawan has grown accustomed to perpetual single-party rule to the unconvincing and quite shameful, box-like guise of a pluralistic democracy. Like Egypt, Algeria, Syria, Iraq and other beguiling Arab lands, it routinely holds elections that equally routinely and miraculously

Five years after the second Gulf war, a small minority of rich and powerful Middle Easterners enjoy golf in Dubai and cellular phones in their BMWs. The vast majority of ordinary Arabs and other Middle Easterners, however, see few signs of improvement in their well-being. They suffer disgruntlement and growing resentment today, and feel persistent tension and concern about the future.

result in virtually a clean sweep for the governing party.

In the Levant, the situation is similarly complex, if not quite as negative. Lebanon remains the great modern Arab enigma: is this a state? a cash cow? a harsh lesson for the rest of us? a prize for the strongest Levantine power? or a sparkling example of cultural destructibility, a little, Euro-configured modern state that has suffered atrociously for two decades yet today still boasts the Arab World's best press, theatre, universities, publishing houses and bookstores? Is Lebanon a depressing of a defiant and uplifting Arab place? If a single polity, mindset and culture can symbolise the entire modern Arab World, it would have to be Lebanon — shattered, fragmented, occupied and brazenly bailed away as war booty by modern Middle Eastern pirates who sail in ships called nation-states, yet doggedly refusing to die, and instead repeatedly, valiantly striving to be whole again, to make sense once more. Equally little Palestine is trying to make history of another kind, but is also alone, divided internally and weak, adrift in a dangerous sea with its own pirates; Palestine the noble memory and the heart-wrenching hope is precariously perched on a thin ledge between the emotional promise of liberation and statehood and the disgrace of permanent Israeli serfdom. Syria is the great Middle Eastern spectacle of dazzling ambiguity and imprecision, a historical giant that made world history repeatedly in the past, but that suffers rampant petty corruption and inexplicable power cuts every day in the present; Syria is alternately anchored in its violent and autocratic tradition and tempted by the promise of economic liberalisation, but seemingly unable to reconcile the two. Jordan has made the transition from the great survivor state to the great psycho-political paradox, making daring moves for peace but consequently finding itself suffering growing unease among its own people; many Jordanians see peace as a new form of the indignity of submission to American-Israeli dictates, in a domestic context of persistent socio-economic and environmental strain. Next door Iraq is the

most painful spectacle of the modern Arab predicament — a beaten, shattered, embargoed and starving land of quasi-sovereign zones that are lessons for all Third World countries to learn: this will happen to you, too, if you make the mistake of challenging or disobeying the power of Washington, London and Tel Aviv. Neighbouring Iran, an important Middle Eastern state, suffers chronic, mass discontent and occasional riots, having already killed tens of thousands of dissenters and gone into the history books as one of the world's most efficient eradicators of domestic political opposition. Israel, for its part, is challenged as never before by the assassination of its leader, in a militarised land that is deeply split among ideological lines, one that continues to suffer the confused temptation and false sense of security that come with being a long-time military occupier of other people's lands.

This is a cursory glance at the brittle condition of much of our region. The situation is even worse, when we consider criteria such as net water depletion rates and balance, foreign debt burdens, unemployment and poverty rates, domestic violence and other social deviance, urbanisation and rural depopulation, quality of public education, real per capita income and purchasing power, environmental deterioration, economic disparities, food self-reliance rates, and other such existential issues. It is not a pretty sight, despite some of the many positive gains that are being achieved by individuals, companies, governments or communities at the local level.

During the 1990/91 Gulf Crisis, James Baker (and some others who led or fed the Cash Register Coalition) correctly identified the most important underlying causes of tension in the Mideast as: the Arab-Israeli conflict, armaments proliferation, economic disparities, and political autocracy. They repeatedly pledged their intention to address these issues, with the people of the region. The passage of time since 1991 indicates that little has been done about these promises or these issues, by Middle Easterners or folks further afield — other than the movement on the Arab-Israeli peace process (and that was well underway, in any case, years before the Gulf War). All of the other main problems that Arab and other Middle Eastern countries suffered in 1990 have probably worsened in the last five years.

The question to ask, I would suggest, is three-fold: a) how many of these problems are due to indigenous Arab or Middle Eastern problems and weaknesses, b) how many of these problems are due to or have been aggravated by the Gulf war and by its more ancient antecedent — the tradition of foreign, usually Western, military forces pouring into the region to set things straight, teach a lesson, establish a new regional or world order, or, in the inimitable words of George Bush, to kick the ass of a local Mideastern thug or tyrant, and, c) is there a cause-and-effect or a symbiotic relationship between indigenous Middle Eastern banditry and Western, imperial power? Our temperate Mideastern zones of chronic conflict clearly suffer the consequences of both local and foreign gangsterism and predatory political piracy; how do we decide which is worse, which came first, and what relationships exist between the two? For the vast majority of Arabs, myself included, who opposed both the banditry of Iraq in Kuwait and the thuggery of the American-led armies against Iraq, the 1991 Gulf war remains active because its root causes have not been erased or even seriously addressed. So what should we do about this inconvenient fact, if we who live around here wish to avoid becoming invisible lands, meaningful to nobody but ourselves, cognisant only to our memories, NATO radar screens and OECD states' immigration police?

The fundamental, ancient question that we avoided in the beat of battle in 1991 remains active in the Middle Eastern theatre, as we were dubbed in 1991: Can foreign military forces, however well intentioned, realistically be sources of security and stability in faraway lands? Or should violence, aggression and instability in faraway lands be resolved more effectively and permanently by addressing the root, indigenous causes of the local people's anger and bitterness?

Five years after the second Gulf war, a small minority of rich and powerful Middle Easterners enjoy golf in Dubai and cellular phones in their BMWs. The vast majority of ordinary Arabs and other Middle Easterners, however, see few signs of improvement in their well-being. They suffer disgruntlement and growing resentment today, and feel persistent tension and concern about the future. They provide considerable fodder to fuel the sort of mass discontent and dislocation that occurred in 1991, and that are likely to recur in view of the generally unsatisfactory conditions that have plagued our region since then.

Major faces spectre of minority government in 1996

By Gerard Raven
Reuter

LONDON — The omens are not favourable for British Prime Minister John Major as he contemplates how long he can continue in office if his conservative government loses its overall majority in parliament this year.

British voters, used to strong one-party governments, traditionally punish parties which either attempt to govern as minorities, or soldier on in office by paring over internal party differences. Following the defection of Conservative Member of Parliament Emma Nicholson to the Centrist Liberal Democrats, the Conservative majority in the 651-seat House of Commons fell to three.

With two by-elections pending in seats the party is very unlikely to win, and with some legislators in bad health, the majority is widely expected to disappear in the course of 1996.

Mr. Nicholson's move has reminded British voters — if they needed reminding — of the deep divisions within the Conservatives over several issues, most prominent among them the country's future relationship with its European Union partners.

But Mr. Major is determined to see through his term of office, which ends in May 1997, come what may. "It is too easy to cut and run when hard decisions have to be made," he wrote recently in the tabloid Sun newspaper.

With the opposition Labour Party enjoying a 30-point opinion poll lead, he believes he has to soldier on until the bitter end in the hope of an upturn in his fortunes.

But Mr. Major has to turn back only 20 years to see the debilitating effects of attempting to run a government without a parliamentary majority in a country with a first-past-the-post electoral system.

In the general election of October 1974, the Labour Party, now the official opposition, won a majority of just three seats in the Commons, far fewer than the 21 which Mr. Major enjoyed in 1992 before by-election losses and other calamities reduced it.

The 1974 majority was the narrowest for 45 years in a country where proportional representation has traditionally been regarded as a continental European peculiarity.

It took little more than 18 months for Labour's majority to disappear as mid-term unpopularity combined with the deaths of some of its legislators to rob the party of a handful of seats.

But Prime Minister James Callaghan carried on in government for a further three years, brushing off occasional parliamentary defeats as minor irritants.

For almost half this time, he was sustained by a pact with the minority

liberals who agreed to the arrangement in return for legislative proposals.

After that he relied still more precariously on the votes of a handful of Scottish and Welsh nationalists hoping, in vain as it turned out, to win mini-parliaments for their countries.

It was only on March 28, 1979 that the House of Commons passed a no-confidence motion in the Callaghan government by a single vote — precipitating the general election which brought Margaret Thatcher's Conservatives to power.

They have been in office ever since.

Looking further back, the precedents are scarcely more encouraging. In May 1929 Labour won a general election but were 20 seats short of an overall majority.

Spurning a coalition with the 59 liberal members of parliament, Prime Minister Ramsay MacDo-

nald battled on alone for more than two years before a sterling crisis of August 1931 led him to form a government of national unity.

The move split Labour and in a general election three months later, MacDonald remained prime minister, but the Conservatives won 473 seats in the then 615-member House of Commons.

Labour did not return to power in its own right until 1945.

But the precedent which British historians point to above all dates back to the beginning of the century.

Between 1902 and 1905, the Conservatives and their liberal unionist coalition allies were badly split on free trade versus imperial preference (tariffs on goods from outside the British empire) as their successors now are over Europe.

Prime Minister Arthur Balfour attempted to paper over the cracks just as John Major now tries to

reconcile Conservatives disagreeing over a proposed single European currency. Some reject the idea, while others want full British participation.

When an election at last came in January 1906, the Conservatives suffered their worst drubbing this century, being reduced to 157 seats against the governing liberals' 400.

"The more Balfour strove to hold his party together, the more his support ebbed away," Simon Sebag Montefiore, reader in government at Oxford University recalled in a recent article.

"Yet, like John Major's government, Balfour's ministers were determined, in (leading liberal David) Lloyd George's graphic words, to die with their drawn salaries in their hands."

The conservatives next entered government when a wartime coalition under Lloyd George was formed in 1916, and had to wait until 1922 for a brief spell of unfettered power.

ur: Mother Teresa: A fragile figure but an irresistible force

Following are excerpts from an interview which Fox Television reporter conducted with mother Teresa. The interview is published in The Jordan Times under a special arrangement with the writer.

By Daphne Barak

MOTHER TERESA is a hunched and fragile figure, but she exudes an irresistible force. Not only can you not say "no" to her, you want to say "yes". Which explains how I ended up, during my Christmas visit with "Mother" in Calcutta, volunteering in the Missionaries of the Charity's House of the Dying, rather than with the orphaned children, homeless women or even the lepers. At 85, Mother Teresa remains an irresistible personality. And she is incredibly persistent. Even if you could say no to her, she would not take it for an answer. Which is why I know now that I will try to do anything to extend her the help she had asked for at the end of my visit. But during my three days in Calcutta, Mother Teresa also learned that I was persistent too. Had I not been, our meeting would have never taken place. The Missionaries of Charity, sat in the middle of steamy, smoggy Calcutta, is as open to volunteers from around the world today as it was when Mother Teresa, born Agnes Gonxha Gajaxhin in Albania in 1910, founded the order in 1950. But it is no longer a hunting ground for the media. Vanity Fair writer Christopher Hitchens changed all that. In late 1994, Hitchens — who a decade earlier had been welcomed in Calcutta and given a personal tour by Mother Teresa herself — aired a 30-minute TV special in Britain that he initially wanted to call "Mother Teresa: Sacred Cow", then changed to "Hell's Angel". His position was that Mother Teresa, a fundamentalist demagogue, that her opposi-

tion to abortion and contraception only serves to guarantee an abundance of the wretched of the earth for her to make a living off; and that her closet is full of moral skeletons from having coaxed up to the likes of "Baby Doc" Duvalier, Robert Maxwell and convicted S&L swindler Charles Keating. Hitchens questioned her handling of millions of dollars in donations, her medical procedures and even her own treatment at the Mayo Clinic, not her own clinic, when she was seriously ill. The whole thing was packaged with a cynicism and coarseness that could only be described as gleeful.

The Sisters try to protect their leader; to maintain her legend by sheltering it; to hide her, particularly as she is getting older, more forgetful, more human. But Mother Teresa knows better what she has always been up against: seeking to do good seems to draw the worst out of the world.

At the "Mother House," the action never varies. Mother Teresa doesn't have the kind of schedule which would include "Interview with Daphne Barak at 10 a.m." For everyone it's the same: The work comes first; everything else waits its turn. You want an interview, you volunteer. Even Princess Diana had to wait and to work. So I get up at 5 a.m. and leave my luxury hotel in the pitch-black. The streets are already crowded; they're always crowded. Thousands of people literally live outside, differently than in American cities. Here, they do their wash, take baths, seek their meals all in plain view in the street. And begging here is just that; it isn't threatening like it can be in the West. The air is so heavy with smoke and smog it is hard to breathe. The odor of incense is everywhere.

When I arrive at the unadorned main building at 6 o'clock and ring the bell at the front door, Mass is already under way. Mother, wearing a blue sweater over her sari-like habit, is sitting against a wall, barefoot as usual. She is praying quietly, but her charismatic presence, her authority here, is pervasive.

By 7 a.m. the volunteers

gather for breakfast: bread and sweet — very sweet — tea and milk. They are old young, men, women, from all over the world.

Tony Pearhouse from England, a divorcee who has been volunteering for months, leads me outside to a "Calcutta bus," with its open spaces where windows should be and its reputation for turning over from the sheer sardine-like mass of its passengers.

We arrive shortly at the House of the Dying, in the outlying neighbourhood of Kalighat, the first house that Mother Teresa created in Calcutta. Today, there are seven houses — for orphans, pregnant homeless women, handicapped people, and so on. (Worldwide, there are more than 4,000 nuns in the order, in scores of missions). Sister Dolores, who is in charge and has just recently returned from working in the U.S., tells me that the inhabitants of the house are picked up in the streets, or "they bring them to us." They have no where else to go. "So go slowly," she advises. "We are not doctors. We cannot cure them. But we can ease pain, give shots, help a little, and give them a lot of love."

Before I can begin to adjust to the surroundings, I am handed an apron and dishes of rice and bananas. The first patient is covered. "She is dead," one of the other volunteers tells me matter-of-factly.

I fix my concentration on the food. There are about 30 women here (the men are in a separate area, attended by male volunteers; there are also eight nuns and a volunteer doctor), lying on beds with thin mattresses and threadbare sheets. Some are skinny, some emaciated. Some are wounded. Some have dirtied themselves during the night. One woman cannot hold herself up; she has to be propped up and fed with a spoon. "You!" said a sister, pointing to me. And I find myself doing it.

Afterwards, it is time to wash them and clean their beds. I find myself working very quickly, hurrying as fast as I could; less time to think. Then I take a little body lotion and rub it on their arms and legs. One old

Mother Teresa

women takes my hand to her toothless mouth and kisses it.

Finally, there is a break for tea. The volunteers — also about 30 of them, hailing from 24 different countries — go up to the roof and sit around and socialise. Most are young. Few have real jobs they care much about. One is working in a French fries factory in Holland.

Another is just working to save money so to be able to come to Calcutta every ten months. It's an escape. For some of the youngest, as Tony tells me, "they came here after being disappointed in love." Among the older ones, there is a retired nurse and a divorced man whose children are grown. But there is every kind of reason to be

here! Here, they all feel needed, important.

Mother receives me with a big hug. We hold hands and chat.

I had never experienced anything like it. I felt charmed. "You see? The reason you are here is that Jesus sent you. You are here for a reason — to help me."

You saw how I refused the photographer who came with you. Because he came from outside. You, I saw, believe. That's why Jesus sent you here. That is why I decided to cooperate with you, and refused others. All from Jesus."

As a matter of fact, I tell her, I'm Jewish...

"But you came from inside... I know. And I don't just see everybody."

What is your relationship with the Pope? I understand he is not thrilled that you don't recruit enough people to the church?

"What a cruel rumour, you see??? I just came back from Rome. I met him. You've got to meet him and tell him that I sent you! We have a good relationship. For me, it's more important to give love to the world and to save a soul than anything."

You've been here for years and still there is hunger, poverty...

"You know the story of the fish?"

"Once upon a time, a good man returned a fish to the water. People told him: 'So what? You saved ONE fish. Tomorrow the sea will drop hundreds onto the shore... What difference did you make?' The man answered: 'For that single fish, I made all the difference in the world. I saved him...'

How do you decide which fish to save? "We have offices all around the world. (She asks a Sister to bring a thick book, full of addresses) You see? Here is Gaza... Yasser Arafat visited me and asked for help, so I created an office there. Here is an office in Rwanda — the people there are really suffering. Here, in Iraq... I don't care about politics, but the Iraqi people need help! I have wonderful sisters in Budapest. I visited the Sisters in New York, in many places..."

You are still travelling, despite your age and illnesses... "My doctors advise me not to travel, but I have to see my sisters, to inspire them."

There is something about you that still appears young — how do you do it with this difficult lifestyle?

"Sometimes, a good feeling from inside is worth much more than a beautiful face..."

How is your health?

"Well... Would you pray for me? Jesus knows how much time I have... Why fight it?"

Do you think about health?

"I see so much of it. When my time comes, I will just take a bed in the house in Kalighat and wait for the end."

In this terrible place that I visited? Why?

"Well, that's what Jesus wants me to do. That is where he sent me, where he expects me..."

You know, some of the people who, like you, have won the Nobel Prize have been murdered — Yitzhak Rabin, Anwar Sadat...

"What? Yes, this is true! You see what hatred does? How much we need love?"

Who will succeed you, Mother?

"Oh, I am not worried. There are so many young people that give up a lot to do the good work. Each Sister

knows her duty. Jesus has his ways."

I've actually heard about power games in "Motherland."

"Oh... Well, everything is up to Him. It is so simple..." How do you describe your mission — do you consider yourself a social worker?

"I don't know. You see, people don't understand what I'm doing. That is why I don't give interviews anymore. People are just had-mouthing..."

So you were hurt by the Hitchens book?

"The whole organisation — volunteers, everyone who has been working, who has been dedicated — got hurt. With no reason. Just publicity..."

On my last day, Mother and a few nuns are praying. I bring flowers. Well, what do you bring to this incredible woman?

Outside, Mother has her picture taken with me. We hug, but when the photographer is ready she decides: "Let's just hold hands..." She grabs me to her personal world and gives me coins and blessings. I can still feel the softness of her hands.

I ask: Is there anything you want to do in this world before you go to a better one?

"Yes! Yes! You've got to help me!"

What?

"I want to open an office in China. Everything was ready. I visited with four sisters in Hong Kong. They need us there! They approached us! Suddenly, we didn't get our visas. We had to go back. You've got to help me. That is why you are here!"

Many years ago, Mother Teresa, then a teacher in India, made up her mind about what she wanted and went to a top government official, asking to be given a house. She said the same thing then: "You've got to help! She was so determined, so convinced. And he did help."

"We will go together to China, to open my office," she says to me with finality, not doubting for a second that she will get her office. Not questioning for a moment whether I would help her. Would you?

Jordan committed to warm peace

(Continued from page 1) tangible results. It is not a question of myself or the government, or the view of the few, but what we are building together is a peace between our peoples... a warm peace, a peace that we perceive for the future of our coming generations to live and enjoy, something that many of us had been denied.

"I am confident that our relations will be an example to others and we hope that whatever we achieved and will achieve will be in the context of a comprehensive peace in this region and that the descendants of the children of Abraham will enjoy peace and the opportunities to build together and to excel and to achieve what is right. I am confident that this will be the case of the coming period. I am very proud with what has been achieved so far."

As far as we are concerned, in the coming days, a few agreements remain to be approved, to be ratified and the papers will be exchanged in the south on the 18th of

this month. That concludes the agenda of all that we set out and tried to achieve when we embarked in our joint effort towards a bright dawn that has broken and hopefully will bring life to the entire region in the context of a comprehensive peace. I feel that now, to have reached this phase, that the people will feel more and more the dividends of peace.

"I believe that the barriers have come down and that the walls are coming down more and more and all of us can feel on both sides the human face of the work which we were denied for so long in the past."

"I know your involvement in economic and social dimensions over so many years in your country and I am sure that in the future people who are striving to attain a bright and a happy future for themselves and those who will follow them will look upon your experience and regard it with great interest, and I hope that our people will come together to build a future that is worthy

of all of us."

"I will always regard the loss of the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin as a personal loss. He was a man of great courage, wisdom, commitment and he was my partner in bringing about peace between our countries. But this loss will give us more determination in the times ahead to ensure that nothing will stand in our way to achieve peace in the face of all forces that will try to stop us from achieving that objective, of life, of human dignity, of human rights... to live free from fear, suspicion, complexes. To live openly. To live together and to build together."

"I will definitely regard the period ahead as period of challenge. This relationship, this peace has to be an example of what peace can be and should be and I am sure I will be continuing work with my friend Prime Minister Peres in the times ahead to ensure that rapid progress has been made to secure comprehensive peace that is so dear to us."

On Sunday night police bomb disposal experts rushed to the residence of Mr. Peres following an anonymous bomb threat, but no explosives were found, police said.

Mr. Peres and his wife Sonia were watching television in their apartment in the three-storey building at the time, but were not evacuated, police said Monday.

They said an anonymous caller speaking Hebrew "without an accent" called Jerusalem police headquarters at 11:32 p.m. Sunday and said a bomb would explode "in three minutes" in the building.

framework to guarantee a future peace.

Palestinian official Nabil Abu Rudeina said Mr. Gore and Mr. Arafat would discuss the ongoing Palestinian autonomy process, including historic self-rule elections taking place Saturday, and international aid for the Palestinian territories.

While in Jericho Mr. Gore and Mr. Arafat will also hold a working lunch with Palestinian businessmen.

Women face uphill fight in Palestinian elections

By Wafa Amr
Renter

DURA, West Bank — Three Palestinian women in traditional embroidered dress watched through a crack in the door while their men met a candidate campaigning for the first Palestinian national elections.

"My three votes will go to this candidate," said one of the men, a farmer. "My vote and that of my wife and daughter are guaranteed."

The Jan. 20 elections will be the first since Israel's handover to self-rule of the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank under peace deals with the PLO starting in 1993.

The campaign for the polls has underscored the challenges facing Palestinian women striving to break the chains of tradition and play a role in a budding democracy.

Only 28 of the 676 candidates for the 88-seat legislative council are women. That's four per cent of the total, while women make up about 54 per cent of Palestinian society.

And though a woman has challenged PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat for the job of executive head in the Palestinian authority, she has no chance against the veteran warrior-turned-politician.

Many traditional women in villages and refugee camps would never consider voting for women. They grew up believing a woman's place was in the home catering to her hus-

band's needs. "I have no opinion," insisted Fatima Amro, a mother of six children who said religious and traditional conservatism would keep her from attending rallies or meeting male candidates.

"My husband will make the right choice for me because he knows what is right. I hardly have time for anything but cooking and bringing up the children," she said.

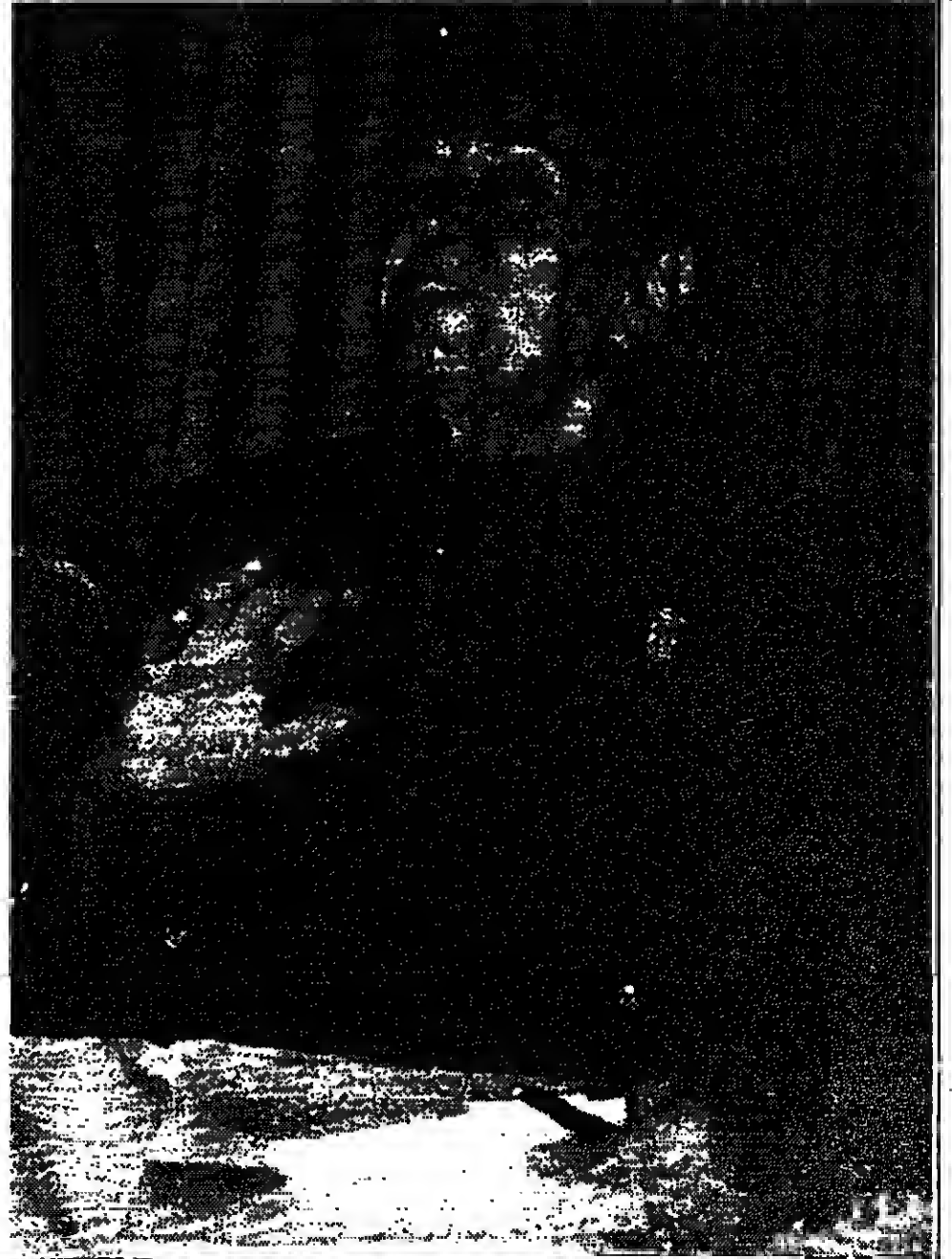
Other women complain their husbands have threatened them with divorce unless they back a certain candidate. A human rights activist said one woman in Gaza was under pressure from her husband to withdraw her candidacy.

During the eight years of a popular uprising against Israeli occupation, women struggled through charities, human rights groups and political organisations to improve their status.

Last week women's organisations led protests in the West Bank and Gaza Strip demanding a quota for women on the elected council. They said it was difficult for women to compete because of historical inequalities in the male-dominated society. They demanded laws to guard their rights.

"In elections, all are equal," Palestinian activist Hanan Ashrawi, a woman candidate in the Jerusalem area, told a gathering of women in the West Bank village of Al Sawahreh.

"When you go to the polling boxes, you will be alone, voting is secret, so choose who you are convinced of and not the choice



Samira Khalil, aged 70, announces in a press conference last month that she will stand against PLO chairman Yasser Arafat in the Jan. 20, 1996 Palestinian elections (Reuters photo)

of your husbands or sons," she said.

Despite being highly politicised, Palestinian society has shown little awareness of rights for women.

"We are forbidden to meet with women in villages and refugee camps," said Mufeed Al Shami, an independent male candidate running in the West Bank Ramallah area.

Ghada Al Sghayar, head of the Jerusalem Centre for Women, said women had taken part in the national struggle, even playing a leading role in resisting occupation, but had merely executed orders of the men and failed to reach decision-making levels.

"Women are not responsible for this social retardation. The society and

political groups are to blame for women's underdeveloped status. It is the consequence of unequal opportunities and injustice," she said.

Working women's interests focused on increasing wages and improving economic conditions in their immediate surroundings, as well as the pursuit of civil rights.

Al Gore arrives in Israel

(Continued from page 1)

are due to resume Jan. 24 at the Wye Plantation outside Washington.

Earlier Monday Mr. Peres reiterated that the U.S.-brokered negotiations with Damascus, which began with a first series of talks last month, were progressing despite downbeat statements by officials from both sides over

the weekend.

"The negotiations are progressing, better than expected on some points," he told a meeting of his labour party. "I am convinced that we can reach a comprehensive peace by 2000."

He also said Israel and the United States were working to build an international

Gore, Mubarak upbeat about Egyptian economy

CAIRO (R) — U.S. Vice President Al Gore predicted Monday an exciting 10 months in Egypt's economic history as the new government carries out its promises of accelerated reform to raise growth rates.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak joined in the enthusiasm, saying the approach of the new century had persuaded Egyptians to embrace the "emerging market" mentality.

The two leaders were speaking at a news conference after more than three hours of talks devoted mainly to a fledgling Egyptian-American "partnership for economic growth."

They also met a joint council of U.S. and Egyptian businessmen, who submitted their recommendations on how to bury the country's socialist and bureaucratic past and create a model market economy with a vigorous private sector.

Mr. Gore, on a one-day visit to Egypt, linked economic reform with a Middle East economic summit in Cairo in November.

"I'm particularly excited about the 10 months between now and the economic summit," he said.

"It is potentially the most exciting period of market opening, economic reform and rising living standards that Egypt has ever seen. We stand ready... to work closely to maximize the potential for this period of dynamic and dramatic change," Mr. Gore added.

President Mubarak made minor changes to his government two weeks ago, naming former Planning Minister Kamal Ganzouri to replace longstanding Prime Minister Atef Sedki.

Mr. Ganzouri and his economic ministers have taken

the country by surprise with daily promises of accelerated privatization, new investment incentives and less bureaucracy.

They say their aim is to increase economic growth to at least eight per cent a year, from an average of at the most 3.5 per cent in the first half of the 1990s.

President Mubarak endorsed his cabinet's ambitions. "The Egyptian people are determined to turn a new chapter in their history at this unique crossroads," he said.

"We have a vision for the future, a vision of a society that moves towards joining the emerging market nations on solid ground. Every Egyptian citizen is willing to double his and her efforts to make this great leap forward promptly," he added.

The businessmen, members of presidents' council, applauded the macroeconomic reforms that the Egyptian government has taken over the past five years but asked it to follow them up faster.

"It is now imperative that the pace of structural reforms be intensified and that a comprehensive economic growth plan be formulated," they said in a joint statement.

The businessmen said they had helped encourage the government to take the first steps towards a build-operate-transfer system for power plants and possibly toll roads.

The Egyptian-American Partnership, signed in September 1994, complements and could eventually replace the \$2 billion in aid which the United States gives Egypt every year.

It is a forum for lobbying on economic policy and business contacts, as well as for small-scale technical cooperation.

S. Arabia ready to sell oil to Jordan

AMMAN (R) — Saudi Arabia's ambassador said Monday his kingdom was ready to resume oil supplies to Jordan, cut when Amman sided with Baghdad during the 1990-91 Gulf crisis.

Officials and diplomats said Saudi foreign minister Prince Saud Al Faisal made the offer last week while on the highest-level Saudi visit since the Gulf crisis.

"The kingdom expressed its full readiness to supply Jordan with any quantities of oil it needs," Sheikh Abdullah Al Saud, Saudi Arabia's new ambassador to Jordan and a relative of King Fahd, told Reuters in an interview.

"All is now in Jordan's hand," he said.

Jordanian sources said they planned no change in their policy of meeting all oil needs from Baghdad.

Aden Port plans to regain lost traffic

ADEN (R) — Aden Port, which used to provide bunkering and services for up to 6,000 ships a year but now handles only 600, is seeking to regain its status as a transshipment centre, port officials said Sunday.

"For 25 years we suffered from poor management and lack of maintenance, but now we look forward to making Aden Port more competitive through services and facilities," Ahmad Abdul Qader, deputy minister of transport, told Reuters.

Closure of the Suez Canal during the 1967 Middle East war sharply reduced the number of ships calling at Aden.

Mr. Abdul Qader said, "if there is (political) stability and management improvement, Aden Port will become the most important port in the region," but he does not expect it to service the same number of ships again.

He added that development of the port should be linked to the development of the Aden airport that would include the building of a new control tower and the construction of a cargo village.

He said development of the port would be the first step in the creation of a free trade zone comprising the entire southern port city.

Impoverished Yemen, a small, independent oil producer, signed an initial \$400 million agreement on Nov. 30 with a Yemeni group to build the infrastructure for a free zone area.

The agreement with Yemen Investment and Development Company (Yemenco) involves the building of a new port and a container terminal opposite the existing port.

The new complex will contain six quays and a navigational channel 16 metres deep and will include services and facilities. Mr. Abdul Qader expects two of the new quays to start operations during 1997.

He said the existing equipment and facilities in the port included a 1,000-tonne dry dock and two floating docks of 4,500 tonnes and 1,500 tonnes.

"These are enough to cope with demand for several years to come. What is important is their proper utilisation," Mr. Abdul Qader added.

The original masterplan for the port development, the airport and the creation of a free zone area was estimated at about \$6 billion in 1993. Officials are unwilling to cite any new figures pending the

signing of the final agreement with Yemenco, expected by the end of January.

Meanwhile, the Yemeni cabinet Sunday approved a 1996 budget totalling 181.41 billion Yemeni riyals (\$1.39 billion), official sources said.

Revenues envisaged in the budget, which the cabinet referred to parliament for final approval, totalled 155.88 billion riyals (\$1.19 billion) with a forecast deficit of 25.53 billion riyals (\$192.3 million) or 14.1 per cent compared to a 29.2 per cent deficit in the 1995 budget, the sources said.

The government has not officially disclosed the budget figures.

Earlier Sunday, Sanaa television said only that the cabinet had approved a budget which included a 20 per cent increase in the wages of government employees, the army and the police.

The television said the cabinet had allocated 2.2 billion riyals (16.9 billion) for development projects in various parts of the country and one billion riyals (\$7.69 million) for social security.

Yemen has abolished the official exchange rate for the rial and the free market rate is about 130 riyals to the

dollar.

The sources said total current expenditures in the new budget amounted to 137.24 billion riyals (\$1.05 billion), while total capital expenditures stood at 44.17 billion riyals (\$343.8 million).

The sources said the deficit in the new budget represented 3.8 per cent to the gross domestic product (GDP) compared to 8.3 per cent in the 1995 budget.

The television said the cabinet had also approved the second-phase plan of economic reforms. There forms, worked out with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, are scheduled to be completed over the coming 15 months.

Economists said the emphasis in the second-phase plan would be financial and economic stabilisation and restructuring.

Prices of basic services and goods such as electricity, water, fuel and diesel are expected to be increased, they said.

The government has already increased the price of locally-made cigarettes by eight per cent and the rates of international telephone calls by about 45 per cent per minute.

In Israel, mass immigration means lower unemployment

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Many developed nations worry that high immigration contributes to unemployment, but in Israel the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Jews from the former Soviet Union has helped fuel exceptional economic growth and slashed joblessness in half, officials say.

Since the ex-Soviet Union opened its doors to Jewish emigration in 1989, more than 700,000 people have flooded into Israel, increasing its overall population by 12 per cent.

During the same period, economic growth averaged six per cent per year and reached seven per cent in real

terms in 1995, when 77,000 immigrants moved to the country, according to the government's Central Statistics Office.

Unemployment, meanwhile, dropped by half to 5.9 per cent of the working population last year.

"Immigration has had an almost miraculous impact because it gives us an extraordinary capital in human talent," Yair Tsaban, the minister for immigrant absorption, told AFP.

He said recent immigrants included 58,000 engineers, 10,000 scientists and 14,000 doctors.

Although some of these professionals had to accept employment in other fields due to a lack of demand for their expertise, they nevertheless represent a human

resource with a level of formal education far above the Israeli average.

"The cost of this specialised workforce is far lower than in the developed countries and this has given us a boost in our export industries, especially in high-technology sectors," said Tsipi Galim, of the finance ministry's technology sector, said Tsipi Galim, of the finance ministry's research department.

She said the ex-Soviet immigrants also arrived at just the right time: As the peace process and the easing of the Arab boycott against Israel coincided with the expansion of export markets, notably in South East Asia and eastern Europe.

The mass arrival of immig-

rants has been felt in virtually every sector of the economy.

Last year, new housing starts hit a record 40,000 units, nearly half of them reserved for immigrants, while household consumption has also soared.

Both phenomena contributed to creating jobs for Israelis and the new immigrants alike. Unemployment among recent arrivals fell from 38 per cent in 1990 to less than 10 per cent last year, according to government statistics.

The flip-side of the coin is that these new workers are also buying imported goods, from cars to appliances, sending Israel's trade deficit to a record \$10.2 billion last year.

In addition, explains David Brodet, general director at the finance ministry, the task of helping immigrants settle down costs the state about \$3.5 billion per year.

A couple with two children, for example, receives \$13,000 from the government during their first year in the country. New immigrants can also receive subsidised loans to purchase their first homes.

Lebanon seeks help to restore postal service

BEIRUT (R) — The Lebanese government invited bids Monday from specialised companies to take over the country's postal services that have been at a near standstill since the civil war.

The services offered to tender were mail handling, express mail, facsimile service and philately, a government advertisement in Beirut newspapers said.

Lebanon has at present no express mail or official facsimile service and new stamp issues are rare. Mail delivery from one Beirut district to another takes weeks. Companies rely on courier companies to send and receive foreign mail and individuals send their mail with friends travelling abroad.

The advertisement said companies interested in bidding to provide the services could obtain tender documents detailing the conditions of the proposal as from Wednesday.

It gave no further details but a source at the posts and communications ministry said Friday the bidding would be open to foreign companies.

Posts and Communications Minister Al Fadel Chalaq announced the decision to privatise the postal services Friday. If the tender is successful, it will be the first state-run service in Lebanon to be taken over by the private sector.

Beirut garbage collection and part of the city bus service are already privately handled. The \$1.8 billion Solidera company is rebuilding war-shattered central Beirut and foreign companies are heavily involved in rebuilding the telephone, electricity and water networks for the state.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, JANUARY 16, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) A responsibility can deter your progress in the morning, but later this evening you can go after personal wishes in a positive manner.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) An outside fellow associate could take your time in the morning today, but later tonight you can catch up on your routines easily.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Handle the duties ahead of your early today. Later tonight you can go to new places and make better plans for the days ahead.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) You have important career activities to do in the morning today, so don't run off on some silly tangent. Be enthused and accomplish a great deal.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Gently handle home affairs early today, and then later be off to do whatever fellow associates expect of you. Handle any public affairs with wisdom.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You had better continue with those special career activities ahead of you today and don't go dashing off bitter and you with other recreations.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) In the morning today, handle that important monetary affair, then later tonight you will have time to enjoy recreation with friends.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You may be so busy today in the outside world that you forget something important at home with your loved ones which must be handled.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Rid yourself of some worry and then get busy at worthwhile activities which can make your life richer and happier for many days to come.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) One who likes to waste your time should be discouraged early today so that you handle property affairs in a proper fashion.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) The aspects are fine today for gaining your personal aims, provided you get rid of some outside restriction without haste.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Handle that new enterprise and then be with a good advisor who is very helpful to you. Be more thoughtful of the feelings of your mate.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

Malaysia may open ties with Israel

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Malaysia may start trade ties with Israel prompted by significant strides in the Middle East peace process, but is not yet ready to set up diplomatic relations, reports have said.

"If the Palestinians and others can have relations with Israel, I don't see why we cannot establish ties step by step," Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad was quoted saying in the Sunday

Star. Predominantly-Muslim Malaysia, a strong supporter of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), has no diplomatic ties with Israel and very restricted trading relations.

Deterrents against dealing with Israel include confiscating the passports of Malaysian citizens found to have visited the Middle Eastern state.

Malaysia's Ministry of In-

ternational Trade and Industry had already been instructed to study possible areas for trade, its minister Rafidah Aziz said.

"We are beginning to see a new country to market our products," Ms. Rafidah was quoted as saying.

Ms. Rafidah said the decision to consider trading with Israel was prompted by major moves towards peace in the Middle East.

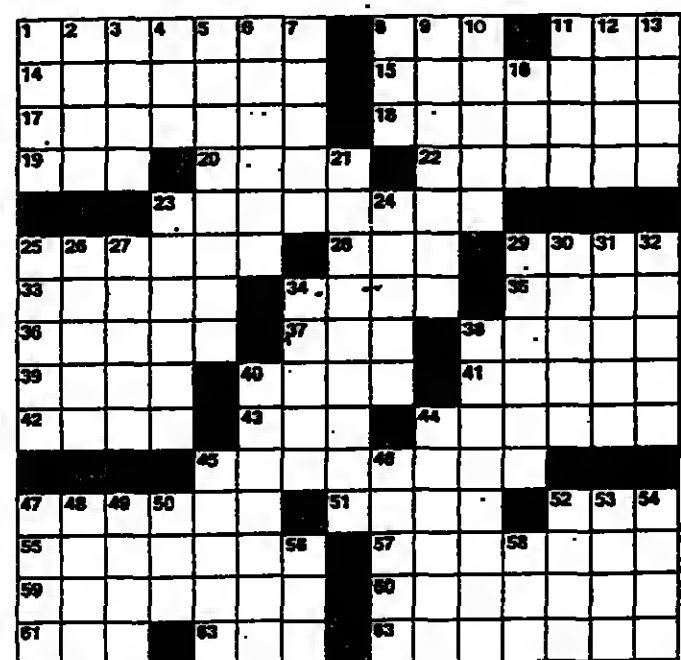
THE Daily Crossword by James Barrick

ACROSS

- 1 A condiment
- 8 Choose
- 11 Male swan
- 14 Fatty
- 15 Garden rocket
- 17 Skin and hair pigment
- 18 One no longer working
- 19 "Gold Bug" author
- 20 Information
- 22 Vulture
- 23 Weigh
- 25 Waterways
- 28 Rough stretch of water
- 29 Beat with a rod
- 33 Assembly place of old
- 34 Strike
- 35 Feast
- 36 Starr and Simpson
- 37 Bible book; abbr.
- 38 Code name
- 39 Architectural term
- 40 Watchful
- 41 Amerinds
- 42 Sly look
- 43 Hgt.
- 44 Surrounded by
- 45 Put into code
- 47 Composer Bela
- 51 Entertaining tale
- 52 Stadium sound
- 55 Of dreams
- 57 Place
- 59 VA city
- 60 Developed gradually
- 61 Terminus
- 62 Blind
- 63 Fate

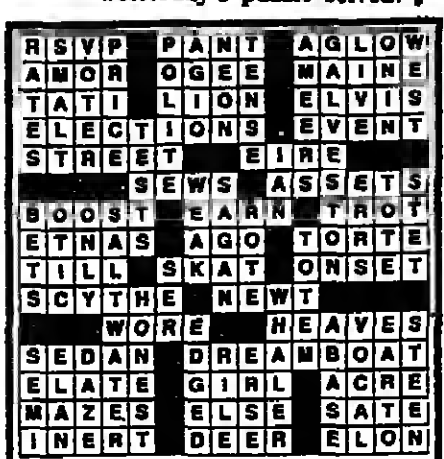
DOWN

- 1 Shoe part
- 2 Notion; pref.
- 3 — green
- 4 Clean air org.
- 5 Flat-bottomed boats
- 6 Chinese, Japanese, etc.



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Yesterday's puzzle solved:



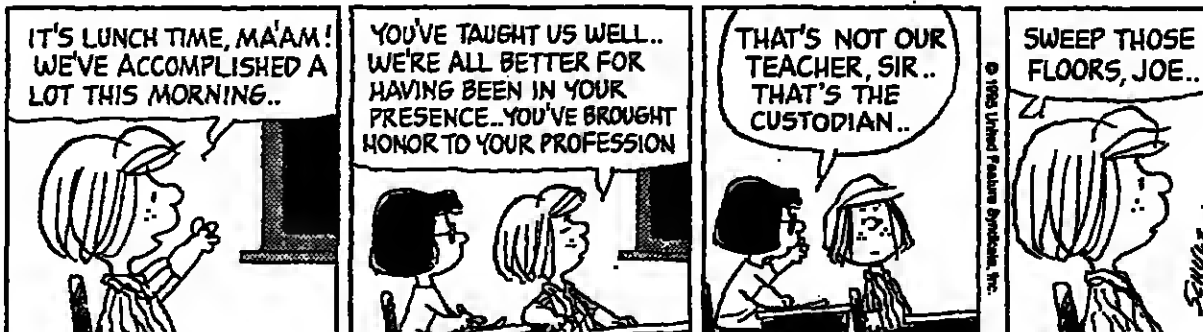
- 7 Lets
- 8 Scull
- 9 Rule of action
- 10 Private instructor
- 11 Milk portion
- 12 Edible spread
- 13 Max or Buddy
- 16 Snare
- 21 Fit to be flown
- 23 Former White House name
- 24 Journal
- 25 Plot
- 26 Standing wide open
- 27 Scandinavian
- 29 Fuddy
- 30 Shocking
- 31 Places of refuge
- 32 Inn patron
- 34 Overcharge for tickets
- 38 Souvenirs
- 40 Diamond Head neighbor
- 44 Come
- 45 French painter
- 46 Alleviated
- 47 Drill
- 48 Shortly
- 49 Enjoy literature
- 50 Stannum
- 52 Musician
- 53 — o'clock
- 54 Lament of old
- 56 A letter
- 58 Final; abbr.

THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen

Marriage Counselor

"Both of us have voice mail, e-mail, faxes and cellular phones—and we still have trouble communicating!"

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



50 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63

Investors formulate new terms for Dead Sea hotel projects

By Amy Henderson
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Dead Sea investors will this week submit a proposal to the government for what they consider to be more equitable leasing and investment terms at the Dead Sea, a local investor said Monday.

"We will be submitting our proposal, agreed upon by our lawyers, this week," said Zeyad Salah, head of Zeyad Salah and Partners Contracting, the representative of the French hotel group Accor.

"We think it is something the government can agree to and is more in line with what we

(investors) want."

Mr. Salah said the group of four investors will recommend that a grace period for building and designing be included in the contract, and will seek a provision that requires that the government be responsible for providing the appropriate infrastructure as a minimum incentive to develop the area. They are also requesting a clause that would extend the lease period to at least 50 years at the rent agreed upon at the signing of the contract and that would also guarantee fixed rent for the duration of the leasing period.

The contracts for the construction of four hotels on the government-owned northern shore of the Dead Sea were expected to be signed in late November but investors, discouraged by the terms on offer from the government, delayed signing until more favourable terms could be agreed on.

Among their main concerns are stipulations in the lease agreement that investors provide their own infrastructure, including water, electricity and telephone services; that the rent (JD 25,000 per hectare) be paid in advance in five-year instalments throughout the 30-year leasing period; and that the

rent may be subject to change after 10 years.

Investors said in December that the terms lacked incentive and were not competitive with what was an offer on the Israeli side of the Dead Sea. They said that under these conditions, Jordan would not be able to keep pace with Israel, which already has 2,000 rooms at the Dead Sea and is planning for major expansion in the wake of the 1994 peace agreement between the two countries.

"We need a solid situation if we are going to invest," Mr. Salah said. "This is Jordanian money and it needs to be protected by better terms."

He said that he hopes that investors will be able to sign within the coming two weeks, as he said that he fears that a reshuffle would delay the process even further.

He said however, that the other investors and their lawyers were optimistic about signing within the expected time frame and about the government's position regarding the issue.

"We do feel that (Minister of Water and Irrigation) Dr. Saleh Irsheidat has been giving the utmost attention to this situation and that he is

very serious about finding solution," Mr. Salah said.

The four hotels are initiatives of both Jordanian and foreign investors which include a consortium involving the Marriott hotels chain of the United States, the French group Accor, the Hyatt chain of hotels and a German company, and their total investment would constitute some \$280 million.

Their construction, part of an ambitious plan to build 8,000 rooms along the coast by the year 2010, would add 1,600 rooms to the 100 available at the Dead Sea Spa Hotel, Jordan's only hotel on the Dead Sea's shore.

UAE curbs operation of foreign auditors

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has introduced a law restricting the activities of foreign auditors in a drive to nationalise jobs and reduce reliance on its large expatriate population.

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Foreign auditors who practise without registration could be jailed for six months and fined between 10,000 and 20,000 dirhams (\$2,725-\$5,450).

The new rules came after authorities tightened their control on general auditing business to curb violations and prevent fresh financial crises.

The UAE, a major OPEC oil producer, has been locked in a drive to replace foreign labour with locals to ensure jobs for thousands of graduates from universities and other educational institutes.

AMPCO earns \$8.5 million from exports of processed tomatoes

EXPORTS OF processed tomatoes, produced by the Agricultural Marketing and Processing Company of Jordan (AMPCO), last year amounted to 10,000 tonnes and earned the company \$8.5 million, AMPCO General Manager Khalid Al Nasser said. He said that another 1,000 tonnes of tomato paste will be exported to Sudan and Egypt before the start of Ramadan next week. About 2,000 tonnes were sold on the local market. In addition to processed tomatoes, AMPCO exported about 100 tonnes of fresh produce last year to Britain, Austria, Germany and Holland.

According to Mr. Nasser, in 1975 AMPCO paid JD 1,233,415 to Jordanian farmers for delivering 25,561 tonnes of fresh tomatoes to its plant at Al Ardah while the amount paid for delivering 100,000 tonnes of fresh tomatoes to the plant at Al Mafrqa was about JD 2.8 million. Both plants produced a total of 15,000 tonnes of highly concentrated tomato paste for home use and for making ketchup. The AMPCO chief said the company is presently paying JD 265,000 to some 500 farmers who were not paid in full for tomato deliveries in the past season.

As for the new season of 1996, the AMPCO plant at Al Ardah is receiving the tomato surplus from Ghor Al Safi to help ease marketing bottlenecks and minimise farmers' losses (Al Ra'i).

Farmers reel under JD 65 million of debt to government, private institution

FARMERS ARE indebted by nearly JD 45 million to government institutions and by some JD 20 million to other private entities, the chairman of the Farmers' Federation, Mamdouh Al Adwan said. He pointed out that, compared to other productive sectors, "the Jordan Valley areas can be considered as economically damaged due to the continuing losses and the deteriorating agricultural conditions over more than 10 years during which millions of dinars were spent on farm production. He explained that the damages result from marketing bottlenecks and selling produce at below-cost prices. Mr. Adwan said that he would contact the concerned authorities this week to find solutions to all aspects of agricultural problems, especially the issues of marketing and indebtedness. He said that he would also demand that the authorities stop chasing debtors who owe money to government lending bodies. Mr. Adwan indicated that he would be seeking protection to farmers from middlemen at the central vegetable markets and fixing of a minimum price for a crate of produce that would reflect the actual cost with a slight profit margin. He noted that crate of eggplants currently sells for between 250 fils to 400 fils, whereas the empty crate itself costs 220 fils without including any other production costs up to delivery to the central markets (Al Dustour).

Relations go sour again between Arab Bank and Shahin Group

RELATIONS BETWEEN the Arab Bank Ltd and the Shahin Group have gone sour again with each side involved in lawsuits against the other. One lawsuit brought by Shahin demands that the Arab Bank extend to the group JD 3 million in credits in accordance with an agreement signed after their dispute in 1994. The Arab Bank filed a lawsuit against the request and obtained an order from the Court of Appeals stopping the case brought by Shahin.

The other lawsuits were brought by the bank against Mohammad Abdul Qader Shahin, one of the shareholders in the group, demanding that he pay JD 2 million under one lawsuit and JD 1 million under another. Sources at the Arab Bank said the bank would demand that Mr. Shahin pay his JD 7 million obligations to the bank as they fall due aside from obligations as a guarantor for the group's total indebtedness of approximately JD 28 million (Al Ra'i).

JORDAN FINANCIAL MARKET				
HOUSING BANK CHARTERED 1988				
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607175				
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 15/01/1996				
COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CHANGING PRICE
ARAB BANK P.C.	60	12820	230.800	230.800
JORDAN REGIONAL BANK	1572	8792	5.600	5.620
BANK OF JORDAN	1030	3737	3.600	3.630
WITOL EAST INVESTMENT BANK	400	463	1.200	1.210
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	140	344	2.500	2.500
THE BUILDING BANK	100	6224	6.200	6.200
JORDAN KIWAT BANK	800	2491	3.100	3.100
JORDAN GULF BANK	17200	17064	1.040	1.050
ARAB JORDAN INVESTMENT BANK	1500	5788	3.860	3.860
JORDAN ECONOMIC BANK	5347	19264	3.610	3.640
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	230	700	3.020	3.000
WITOL SAVINGS INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	103	374	3.150	3.150
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	6000	1984	3.300	3.300
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	3400	4532	1.310	1.310
BANKS SECTOR				
	39963	88364	INDEX NUMBER: 183.53	CHANGE: +0.11%
JORDAN INSURANCE	5200	16440	3.150	3.200
JORDAN FRENCH INSURANCE	100	274	2.750	2.740
INSURANCE SECTOR				
	5326	17015	INDEX NUMBER: 129.26	CHANGE: +0.58%
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	27196	46853	1.670	1.690
JORDAN DISTRICT ELECTRICITY	1240	1860	1.500	1.500
JORDAN POWER GENERATION	430	1200	2.800	2.800
JORDAN INTERNATIONAL HOTELS	2400	13440	5.600	5.600
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINES	3350	8655	2.550	2.600
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	2750	4647	1.690	1.700
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	1250	1225	0.970	0.980
JORDAN INTERNATIONAL TRADING CENTER	2000	2210	1.100	1.100
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & COMMODORE HOTELS	1250	2690	2.130	2.150
ARAB ENTER. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	2707	9165	3.410	3.390
JORDAN PRIVATE UNIVERSITY	1500	1815	1.220	1.230
WITOL CO. FOR ORGANIZING LAND TRANS.	1500	12384	8.250	8.240
WITOL LAND DEVELOPMENT CORP.	1250	1230	0.980	0.990
SERVICES SECTOR				
	52680	109751	INDEX NUMBER: 126.63	CHANGE: +0.31%
THE JORDANIAN COFFIN FACTORY	3037	10995	3.630	3.620
JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINER	750	2395	3.190	3.200
THE ARAB POTASH	800	2678	3.350	3.350
JORDAN POTASH RAPIDITY	3017	29868	9.900	9.900
WOODEN INDUSTRIES	277	150	0.540	0.540
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	100	1015	10.150	10.150
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	5900	26484	4.480	4.480
JORDAN CERAMIC INDUSTRIES	100	610	6.100	6.100
RAPIA INDUSTRIES	2000	4200	2.100	2.100
AR AL DAMA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	1989	14420	7.250	7.250
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	31250	18540	0.590	0.590
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	2480	4830	1.950	1.950
NATIONAL STEEL INDUSTRIES	4200	6720	1.600	1.600
NATIONAL INDUSTRIES	3000	2000	0.660	0.660
JORDAN ROCKWELL INDUSTRIES	2042	2141	1.050	1.050
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	1650	2799	1.700	1.690
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	2750	8000	2.900	2.900
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	15829	29880	1.860	1.900
JORDAN NEW CARLS COMPANY	4750	6590	1.390	1.390
K2-ZAY READY WEAR MANUFACTURING CO.	4050	11008	2.750	2.780
INTERNATIONAL TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	17400	18149	1.040	1.040
UNION CHEMICAL & VEGATARIAN CITY INDUSTRIES	4550	1741	1.540	1.540
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR				
	111241	212795	INDEX NUMBER: 121.24	CHANGE: +0.18%
GRAND TOTAL				
	209210	423925	INDEX NUMBER: 152.64	CHANGE: +0.14%

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Monday.

One U.S. dollar	1.3628/38	Canadian dollar	1.4472/82
	1.4472/82	Deutsche marks	1.6206/16
	1.6206/16	Dutch guilders	1.1660/70
	1.1660/70	Swiss francs	29.72/76
	29.72/76	Belgian francs	4.9505/55
	4.9505/55	French francs	1572.8/4.3
	1572.8/4.3	Italian lire	105.04/14
	105.04/14	Japanese yen	6.5900/00
	6.5900/00	Swedish crowns	6.3470/20
	6.3470/20	Norwegian crowns	5.5915/15
	5.5915/15	Danish crowns	1.4218/28
	1.4218/28	Singapore dollars	0.7435/40
	0.7435/40	Australian dollars	7.7310/20
	7.7310/20	Hong Kong dollars	
One sterling	\$1.5446/56		
Gold (ounce)	\$395.25/395.75		

Aramex gets hooked to Internet

AMMAN — The ARAMEX Web site is now on the Internet for the world to access, with ARAMEX being the first Arab private company to make available this facility.

"We are excited to offer our customers the best in service and the latest in technology," says President and Chief Executive Officer Fadi Ghandour, adding that "the creation of the ARAMEX Web site reflects our commitment to providing the corporate market with a complete solution, satisfying customer needs."

In the fast-moving, global competitive business environment of today, it is crucial that current information is available to the customer who requires it. The Internet, particularly the World Wide Web, is changing the way companies do their business. ARAMEX is moving with this trend with the help of B.O.C., a consulting firm based in Amman specialising in information technology information services and Internet consulting.

ARAMEX was established in 1982 with a single wholesale courier route. Today, thirteen years later.

ARAMEX has expanded to become a leading regional courier and cargo company with more than 900 employees working in over 59 stations in 29 countries worldwide.

UAE curbs operation of foreign auditors

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Financial Markets

Forex Currency Exchange Rates Date: 15/1/1996

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTH	6 MTH	12 MTH
U.S. Dollar	5.31	5.25	5.18	5.0625
Swiss Franc	6.25	6.25	6.18	6.12
Deutsche Mark	5.50	5.30	5.25	5.19
Swiss Franc	1.44	1.38	1.30	1.20
French Franc	4.18	4.15	4.31	4.31
Japanese Yen	0.25	0.31	0.37	0.43
European Currency Unit	4.88	4.80	4.78	4.75

Source: Bank of Jordan

Gold Prices Date: 15/1/1996

Gold	USD/Oz	JD/Gm	Silver	USD/Oz	JD/Gm
Gold	395.35	7.90	Silver	5.45	0.100

* All rates

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin Date: 15/1/1996

Currency	Buy	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7080	0.7100
Swiss Franc	1.0934	1.0989
Deutsche Mark	0.4895	0.4919
Swiss Franc	0.6076	0.6106
French Franc	0.1422	0.1436
Japanese Yen	0.6709	0.6745
Dutch Guilder	0.4369	0.4391
Swedish Krona	0.0000	0.0000
Italian Lira	0.0450	0.0452
Belgian Franc	0.0000	0.0000

* Per 100

Other Currencies Date: 15/1/1996

Currency	Buy	Offer
Bahrian Dinar	1.8820	1.8780
Lebanese Lira	0.043975	0.043940
Saudi Riyal	0.1870	0.1898
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3070	2.3070
Qatari Riyal	0.1932	0.1945
Egyptian Pound	0.2100	0.2200
Omani Riyal	1.8350	1.8410
UAE Dirham	0.1982	0.1993
Greek Drachma	0.2875	0.3055
Cypriot Pound	1.4925	1.5530

* Per 100

Cowboys head back to the Super Bowl

DALLAS (AFP) — Emmitt Smith ran for three touchdowns and Troy Aikman threw for two more as the Dallas Cowboys earned their third Super Bowl berth in four seasons Sunday with a victory over Green Bay in the National Football League playoffs.

The Cowboys beat the Packers 38-27 in the National Conference championship game.

They will meet the Pittsburgh Steelers, who beat the Indianapolis Colts 20-16 in the American Conference championship game earlier Sunday.

Smith carried the ball 35 times for 150 yards and scored on a one-yard.

Run in the second quarter. His touchdown runs of five and 16 yards in the fourth quarter sealed the victory for Dallas, who will be appearing in their eighth Super Bowl.

Aikman completed 21 of 33 passes for 255 yards and the touchdown of six and four yards to Michael Irvin. Irvin caught seven passes for 100 yards.

Smith's second touchdown run of the game, a five-yard burst with 12:24 left, sent the Cowboys ahead, 31-27. Larry Brown intercepted a pass on the Packers' next drive and Smith sprinted 16 yards for his third touchdown with 9:28 left to make the score 38-27.

Regular season most valuable player Brett Favre's one-yard touchdown pass to Robert Brooks had given Green Bay a 27-24 lead over the Cowboys after three quarters.

Favre's third touchdown pass of the game was set up by a 54-yard pass play to tight end Keith Jackson, who was pulled down at the Dallas one yard line. Three plays later, Favre hit Brooks over the middle.

Smith had plunged over from the one with 24 seconds

left in the second period to cap a 99-yard drive and give Dallas a 24-17 lead.

Chris Jacke kicked a 46-yard field goal just 70 seconds into the game to give the Packers a 3-0 lead.

Aikman's two short touchdown passes to Irvin gave the Cowboys a 14-3 lead in the first quarter.

Favre responded with a 73-yard touchdown pass to Brooks that cut the lead to 14-10. It was the longest scoring play in Packers' playoff history.

Antonio Freeman's 39-yard punt return and a 15-yard flagrant facemask penalty against Dallas punter John Jett on the tackle then gave the Packers the ball on the Dallas 35 yard line.

Favre hooked up with tight end Keith Jackson from 24 yards out to push Green Bay ahead 17-14.

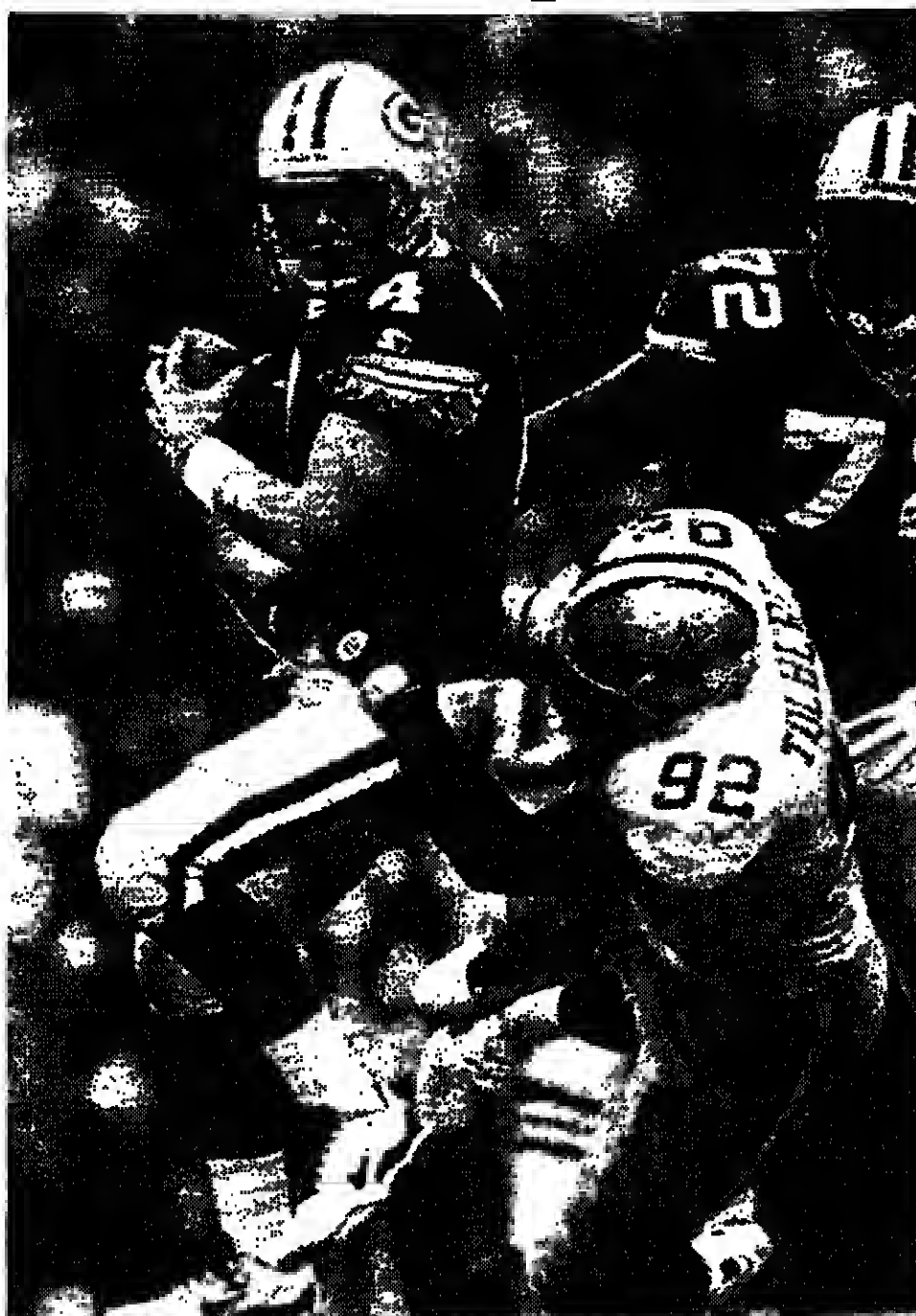
Chris Boniol's 34-yard field goal lifted the Cowboys into a 17-17 tie with the Packers, and Smith's one-yard TD run made it 24-17 Dallas at the interval.

The game was delayed about 10 minutes in the second quarter when Packers wide receivers coach Gil Haskell was hospitalized after being injured on the sidelines.

Brooks was run out of bounds by Darren Woodson of Dallas after catching a pass and the pair rolled into Haskell, who was sent sprawling. He was in serious condition with a head injury apparently suffered when he hit his head on the ground in the fall.

The Cowboys who won consecutive Super Bowls after the 1992 and 1993 seasons were appearing in the NFC Championship game for the fourth straight season. They played San Francisco the last three years.

The Packers upset defending Super Bowl champs San Francisco earlier in the playoffs to reach the title game for the first time in 28 years.



Green Bay quarterback Bret Favre (left) is dragged down for a sack by Dallas Cowboys defensive end Tony Tolbert during the fourth quarter of the NFC Championship game in Irving, January 14 (Reuters photo)

Back then, Bart Starr's touchdowns in the final seconds gave Green Bay a 21-17 win, and they went on to beat the Oakland Raiders in Super Bowl 2.

Injured Agassi struggles through 1st round

MELBOURNE (R) — World No. 2 Andre Agassi's argument with a spiral staircase nearly cost him a second-round berth at the Australian Open on Monday as he struggled to beat a lowly-ranked qualifier in a marathon five-setter.

While Agassi's seeded compatriots wrapped up their matches in straight sets on the tournament's opening day, the defending champion, his right knee heavily strapped, struggled to beat Argentina's Gaston Etis, ranked only 133 in the world.

The 25-year-old Las Vegas, who finally triumphed 3-6, 7-6, 4-6, 7-6, 6-3 after three hours and 18 minutes, got into a tangle with a tennis bag on his hotel staircase on Sunday night and banged his right knee on an iron rail.

He inflamed tendons and told reporters after he squeaked through against Etis that he would almost certainly have made an early exit from the year's first Grand Slam event if his inexperienced opponent had taken his opportunities.

Etis, 21, a clay court specialist playing in his first ever Grand Slam, was twice within two points of the match on the rebound ace centre court at Flinders Park but allowed Agassi to claw his way back.

"He was getting pretty creative in finding ways to lose the match," second-seeded Agassi told reporters at his news conference, with his knee packed in ice.

"I felt a bit limited about what I could do," Agassi said, adding the injury forced him to ration his movement on court.

The freak injury was the last thing Agassi needed going into his first tournament since November after being sidelined with a nagging chest muscle strain sustained in the Davis Cup semifinal against Sweden in late September.

However, Agassi was confident he would be fit for his second-round match against 94th ranked fellow American Vince Spadea. "I think come Wednesday I will be alright," Agassi's labours on centre court would have been avidly watched by seeded compatriots Michael Chang and Jim Courier, both of whom had straight sets victories in their first round matches and are in Agassi's half of the draw.

World number five Chang was ruthlessly efficient in his 6-2, 6-1, 6-2 demolition of the Czech Republic's David Rikl while Courier was a little more stretched in his 7-5, 7-6, 6-4 defeat of Belgium's Johan Van Herck.

Chang hardly raised a sweat in beating the 85th ranked Rikl in only 90 minutes to back his belief that both top seed and world number one Pete Sampras and Agassi are beatable this year.

"It was a good first match



Defending champion Andre Agassi of the U.S. adjusts the bandage on his injured knee during his first round match against Argentina's Gaston Etis on centre court at the Australian Open in Melbourne on Monday (Reuters photo)

for me, I got to hit a lot of balls," Chang told reporters.

Chang, 23, who lost to Sampras in the 1995 semifinal at Flinders Park, came into this year's event after winning last week's Colonial Classic for the second year running and said the exhibition event was a perfect warm-up.

"It was a definite confidence booster... it's a good way to get pumped up quick-

seed Natasha Zvereva of Belarus who went down to Israel's Anna Smashnova 2-6, 6-4, 5-7.

Sawamatsu was one of four Japanese women to make it through to the second round.

With number five seed Kimiko Date still to play her first round match, Japan could mount an even more effective challenge than last year when it had a record

Australian Open

ly," Chang said.

Chang will meet Switzerland's Jakob Hasek in the second round while Courier comes up against compatriot Jeff Tarango, who beat Australia's Paul Kilderry in straight sets.

The 74th-ranked Tarango, 27, who caused outrage when he stormed off the court at Wimbledon last year, was perfectly behaved after a ban on him competing in the open was overturned following an apology last month for his extraordinary walk-off.

Sampras, who missed the Classic with a bad bout of influenza, opens his campaign on Tuesday with a first-round match against Australia's Richard Fromberg.

Apart from Agassi, only ninth-seeded Wayne Ferreira struggled. The south African took five sets to beat American Jonathan Stark after cruising to a two sets to love lead.

Sawamatsu leads Japanese charge

Fifteenth seed Naoko Sawamatsu led a Japanese women's charge into the second round of the Australian Open tennis championships on Monday.

Sawamatsu fought back to beat Romania's Catalina Cristea 4-6, 6-2, 6-1 on the opening day of the year's first Grand Slam event when all but one of the women seeds booked a spot in the second round.

The only casualty was 12th

four players in the Open third round.

Of the other seeds, Argentina's number six seed Gabriela Sabatini was the most impressive beating American Shaun Stafford 6-0, 6-1 in only 52 minutes.

Sabatini, who was knocked out in the first round of the Open last year, now meets Karina Habsudova of Slovakia in the second round.

Third-seeded Spasirad Araxia Sanchez-Vicario, losing finalist last year to defending champion Maryam Pierce, also had an easy first-round workout against Beate Reinstadler, beating the Austrian in straight sets, 6-2, 6-2.

The women's spotlight now falls on number one seed Monica Seles who makes her open debut this year on centre court on Tuesday against American qualifier Janet Lee.

Seles, 22, who suffered a slight groin strain in winning the Peters International on Sunday in Sydney, had two practice sessions on Monday and appeared to have made a full recovery.

Seles, chasing a fourth open title, is playing in Australia after a four-month injury layoff following her comeback last August. She had been out of the tennis for 28 months after her stabbing by an obsessed fan of German rival Steffi Graf in April 1993.

Graf, joint world number one with Seles, is absent from the Open because of foot surgery.

Steelers beat Colts

PITTSBURGH (AFP) — The Pittsburgh Steelers earned a ticket to the Super Bowl here on Sunday, beating the Indianapolis Colts 20-16 in the National Football League American Conference championship game.

Ram Morris plowed into the end zone from a yard out for the winning touchdown 94 seconds from time.

The Steelers, who have won all four of their previous Super Bowl appearances, play the winner of the Dallas-Green Bay National Conference title game in the National Football League championship game in Tempe, Arizona, on January 28th.

The Steelers expunged the memory of last year's AFC Championship game, when they came on three yards short against the San Diego Chargers.

For a few moments, they appeared on the verge of a similar upset, when Colts quarterback Jim Harbaugh threw a 47-yard touchdown pass to Floyd Turner with less than nine minutes remaining to give the underdog Colts a 16-13 lead.

Steelers quarterback Neil O'Donnell responded by completing a 37-yard pass to Ernie Mills to the Colts one-yard line.

Morris' first attempt at the run failed. On the second he

powered across the line, dragging Colts defenders with him.

Still the Colts kept coming. Harbaugh piloted Indianapolis back down the field, and on the last play of the game lofted a hail Mary pass into the end zone toward Aaron Bailey, who was surrounded by Steelers.

In the crush of players, it appeared that Bailey might have captured a miraculous touchdown. It was incomplete, having bounced on the ground before Bailey got control of it.

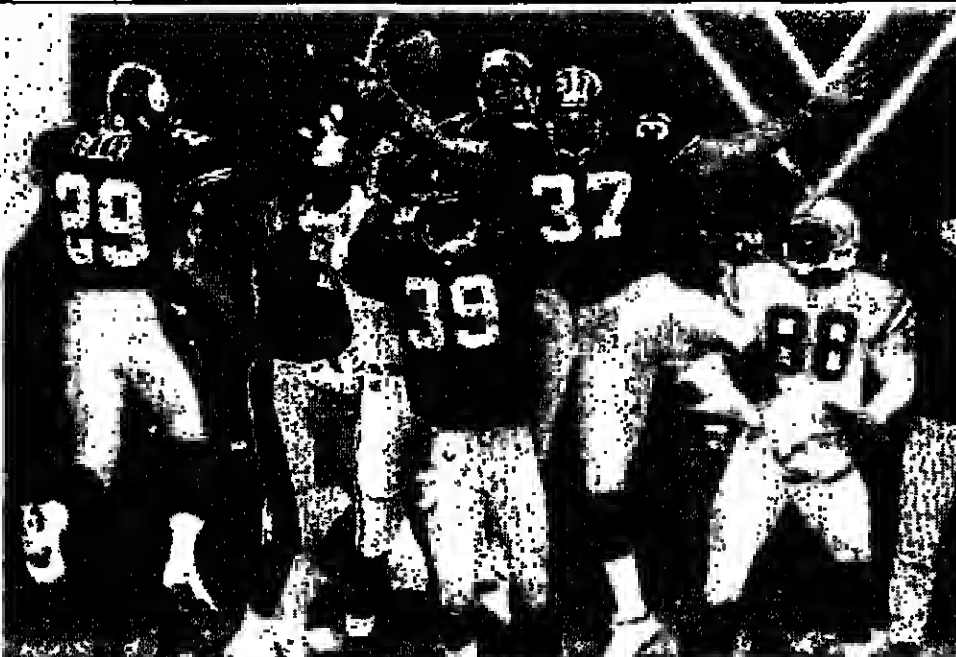
The Steelers have four Super Bowls but have not been to the NFL finale since the 1979 season, when they beat the Los Angeles Rams 31-19.

Earlier in the period, Harbaugh hit Turner in full stride at the eighth and he took it into the end with 8:46 left to play one to push Indianapolis ahead after the Colts' defense had held off the Steelers deep in their own territory.

O'Donnell threw a five-yard touchdown pass to Kordell Stewart with 13 seconds left in the first half to give Pittsburgh a 10-6 lead at the break.

The Colts took the second half kickoff and marched inside the Steelers' 20 yard line for the third time, and for the third time they were stopped.

Cary Blanchard's third



Indianapolis Colts' wide receiver Aaron Bailey (obscured) attempts to make a catch on a last second pass from quarterback Jim Harbaugh in the fourth quarter of the AFC Championship game, January 14 at Pittsburgh's Three Rivers Stadium (Reuters photo)

field goal, a 37-yarder with 9:57 left in the third period, cut the Steelers' lead to 10-9.

Norm Johnson, who had a 31-yard field goal in the first quarter, kicked a 37-yard field goal in the third to stretch Pittsburgh's lead to 13-9 going into the final quarter.

He missed a 40-yard attempt with just under 11 minutes left that would have given the Steelers a seven-point lead. Indianapolis took

over after that miss and drove downfield to take the lead.

Blanchard's second field goal of the game had given the Colts a 6-3 lead over the Steelers late in the first half. Blanchard connected from 36 yards put with 12:08 left in the second period after the Colts narrowly missed a touchdown. Jim Harbaugh's pass to Floyd Turner in the end zone was deflected at the last second by Chris Oldham.

Harbaugh set off the go-

ahead field goal with a 30-yard pass to Sean Dawkins after he eluded several pass rushers.

Blanchard had a chance to put the Colts ahead with four minutes left in the third quarter but his 47-yard attempt was wide.

The Steelers took over and moved down into Colts' territory before stalling and setting for Johnson's 36-yard field goal with 43 seconds left in the period.

Ajax finally beaten; Parma, Newcastle win

PARIS (AFP) — European champions Ajax Amsterdam suffered their first Dutch league defeat for two years on Sunday, when they went down 1-0 at Willem II Tilburg — the last team to beat them.

While AC Milan suffered a goalless draw with bottom club Cremonese, and a string of first division sides were knocked out of the French Cup first round, Ajax took the biscuit for the upset of the weekend.

Ajax, unbeaten throughout the whole of last season, had suffered their last previous defeat on the final day of the 1993-94 campaign — May 8, 1994 — also an away game at Willem II Tilburg, when they went down 2-1.

This time, it needed a 55th minute winner from Henry Van der Vegt.

Fiorentina continued an excellent run of form to close to within a single point of Milan, beating Piacenza 2-1 as the Serie A season reached the halfway stage.

An early strike from the promising Anselmo Robbiati was cancelled out on 36 minutes by Francesco Turini, but Fiorentina were back in front just two minutes later through Francesco Baiano.

Milan were ruing the absence of World Player of the Year, George Weah, currently on international duty with Liberia in the African Nations Cup finals in South Africa.

The best efforts of Roberto Baggio, Marco Simone and Dejan Savicevic were in vain, and Cremonese might even have snatched a win when Andrea Tentoni missed a golden opportunity in the dying minutes.

It was only Cremonese's 11th point of the season, but the 34th for Fabio Capello's title favourites, who have regularly been four points clear in recent weeks.

Parma, three points off the pace to third slot, were comfortable 4-0 winners over Cagliari, despite having defender Luigi Apolloni sent off, but reigning champions Juventus needed Fabrizio Ravanelli to convert a 41st minute penalty to salvage a draw at home to third from bottom Bari.

Igor Protti, the Serie A's top scorer, needed only nine minutes to notch his 13th of the season for Bari.

There was better news for English coach Roy Hodgson, whose Inter Milan picked

themselves up from last week's 4-1 drubbing by Bari to beat AS Roma 2-0. New signing Marco Branca got both goals.

In Sunday's evening match, Lazio and Torino drew 1-1 after a final flourish saw Torino's Ruggiero Rizzitelli break the deadlock in the 81st minute and Alessandro Lanuzzi equalise in the 90th.

In France, fifth-division Bleod performed the Cup giant-killing heroics, dumping first division Bastia out of the tournament.

In all, six top-flight sides — Bastia, Gueugnon, Rennes, Lyon, Lens and Guingamp all bade the competition farewell for another year after falling at the first hurdle.

Elsewhere, Nice needed penalties to see off third division Brest, and Setrasbourg also had to go to spot-kicks to spare their blushes and overcome another third division outfit in Valenciennes.

Championship favourites Paris SG scored a laborious enough 3-1 win over minnows Chateauroux with a brace from Patrice Loko, while his old club Nantes put seven past the amateurs of Saint-Quentin.

Spanish league leaders Atletico Madrid were lucky to only drop two points in a 1-1 draw with lowly Albacete on Saturday. Argentine Diego Simeone getting their equaliser in the 89th minute.

Compostella moved up from third to second slot — swapping places with Espanyol after beating them 2-1. However, Atletico are still seven points clear at the top.

Barcelona could only draw 1-1 at home to Deportivo La Coruna on Sunday night to stay fourth in the table, while champions Real Madrid had to conjure up two goals in the last five minutes to snatch a 2-2 draw at home to the European Cup Winners Cup holders, Real Zaragoza.

In London a vital goal from unused hero Steve Watson helped Newcastle to extend their lead at the top of the Premiership to nine points in a 1-0 win at struggling Coventry on Sunday.

Newcastle, bidding for their first championship for 69 years, still have a game in hand over Manchester United with only 16 more to go as the bookies slashed their title odds to 1-5.

It was only his sixth start of

the season for England under-21 utility player Watson, who had already delivered League and League Cup winners against Liverpool.

But this was not the champagne performance English football has come to expect from the runaway leaders and, after the league defeat at Old Trafford over Christmas and cup stumbles against Chelsea (FA) and Arsenal (Coca-Cola), manager Kevin Keegan will be taking nothing for granted.

French star David Ginola was a fitful performer, producing only sporadic touches of genius but it was his 44th-minute cross that tempted John Salako into a fatal blunder that led to the goal.

As the ball curved from left to right, the one-time England winger tried to volley clear, despite full-back Marcus Hall being better placed behind him.

He managed only to knock the ball down perfectly into the path of Watson, and the underrated Newcastle midfielder burst clear into the penalty area and beat Steve Ogrizovic from close range with a deft touch of foot.



Barcelona's Portuguese midfielder Luis Filipe Figo (left) fight for the ball with Deportivo La Coruna defender Francisco Jemez during the Spanish first division soccer match in Barroa Camp Nou stadium on Sunday (Reuters photo)

سكنا من الاجل

Majerle leads Cavs over Suns

PHOENIX (R) — Dan Majerle scored 20 points in his return to Phoenix Sunday and the Cleveland Cavaliers held the struggling Suns to their lowest total in 15 years, 89-74.

"We lead the league in defence and we work hard at it and we're getting even better," the Cavs' Terrell Brandon said. "It's kind of different when you play the Suns and they don't score."

The Suns matched a franchise low with 28 field goals in their worst output since a 105-68 loss to the Kansas City Kings on March 8, 1981, the lowest total in club history.

"That's the worst it's been," Phoenix coach Paul Westphal said. "That's a good team but that doesn't excuse the way we played. We have to make baskets."

"I look at the stats sheet and you are not going to beat a college team if you shoot the ball like that. That second quarter we looked like we hadn't played basketball and hadn't met before."

Phoenix has lost six of seven games and is five games under .500 for the first time since the final day of the 1987-88 season. The Suns also have dropped five straight home games, matching its longest slide in almost nine years.

Majerle was playing his first game in Phoenix since being traded in the off-season for centre John "hot rod" Williams. Majerle spent the first seven seasons of his career with the Suns.



Boston Celtics forward David Wesley is fouled driving to the basket by the Atlanta Hawks Andrew Lang in the first period of play at the Omni in Atlanta. Atlanta defeated Boston 108-105. (Reuters photo)

"It went pretty good," said Majerle about his return. "I played well and we won. I was real nervous. I've been waiting for this for a long time and they (the fans) gave me a great reception."

"I feel for them as far as how they're performing and

not winning. I feel bad for them but obviously we wanted the win tonight." Brandon and Chris Mills scored 18 points apiece for the Cavaliers, who snapped a three-game losing streak with their second straight win at America West Arena.

Blundell signs for Indy Car team

LONDON (AFP) — Englishman Mark Blundell is set to follow the path of compatriot Nigel Mansell by switching from Formula One to Indy Car racing, it was announced Monday.

Blundell has signed for the PacWest Racing Group to compete in the 1996 World Series after not being offered a Grand Prix drive this coming season.

A move to Indy Car was expected after London-born Blundell missed out on the vacant berth at the Sauber-Ford team to fellow Brit Johnny Herbert before Japan's Ukio Katayama retained his Tyrrell Yamaha spot.

The 29-year-old beat off strong competition to clinch the PacWest spot alongside another ex-Formula One driver, Mauricio Gugelmin, after impressing during a test drive just before Christmas.

Blundell, who finished 10th in last year's drivers' world championship with McLaren-Mercedes, will compete in the Ford Cosworth-powered car at all 16 races in the series.

Blundell, who will link up with the team this week, said: "I am delighted to join PacWest. Even though I've only tested with them on one occasion, I felt comfortable with the team right away."

"I'm looking forward to this new challenge and teaming with Mauricio for what will be a tremendous year. For me, this is the beginning of a great future in Indy Car racing."

Brazil advance in Gold Cup

LOS ANGELES (R) — Brazil, clinically exploiting the defensive errors of their outclassed opponents, beat Honduras 5-0 on Sunday to reach the semi-finals of the CONCACAF Gold Cup.

The comfortable victory should set up a semi-final clash with the United States, provided the Americans beat El Salvador on Tuesday.

In an earlier first-round match Sunday in San Diego, Mexico beat Guatemala 1-0 to advance to the semi-final of the nine-team gold cup tournament organised by CONCACAF, the umbrella soccer federation for North and Central America and the Caribbean. Brazil has been invited to take part to make up the third first-round group.

Thailand keeps 1998 Asian Games

BANGKOK (R) — Three-time Asian Games host Bangkok will hold the 1998 Asian Games, having convinced the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) of its readiness, a government official said on Monday.

"I signed a memorandum of understanding with (OCA president) Sheikh Ahmad Al Sabah, which lays out the conditions which we will follow," said Pongpol Adireksarn, minister responsible for Thailand's sports affairs.

Pongpol made the announcement at a news conference upon his return from Kuwait, where he and a delegation of Thai sports officials made a presentation to Sheikh Ahmad and the OCA in a last-ditch effort to keep the Games in Thailand.

OCA officials in December threatened to look for a new

host for the next Asian Games because they were not satisfied with Thailand's preparations.

The council gave Thailand a January 5 deadline to prove it would be organised and ready to run the games, held every four years.

"At the beginning I was worried. But after we sent them a progress report for the January 5 deadline they issued a statement saying that they were satisfied," Pongpol told Reuters.

"Then they invited me to Kuwait... so I had this meeting with the Sheikh."

"Our worries are over. Now we just have to get to work. If we really put the effort into it, together we can do it in time."

Part of the OCA's complaint was that Thailand had made little progress in planning and preparing for the

games, despite the fact that it had had five years since being awarded the Asian Games in 1990.

Among the worries of the OCA, which represents 44 member nations, was that Thailand had still not appointed a complete organising committee to oversee the games.

After the December warning, which sports officials say caught them off guard, the Thai government hastily set up six committees and established a permanent secretariat at the Olympic headquarters to oversee the games.

"For the past five years there has been no certainty, no one was responsible to anyone and every time the OCA asked something it was referred to a 'higher authority'."

Santiparb Tejavaniya, OCA treasurer and assistant secretary general of the organising committee, told Reuters.

"It was really quite emotional, but it's been worked out. With this trip everything has been cleared."

"We are very happy now and hopefully now we can get to work."

One of the key next steps will be to work on funding, said Pongpol. Many sponsors had been wary of investing until they were sure the games would be held in Bangkok.

Thailand also has to finish constructing or improving sports facilities and athletes' accommodation in Bangkok well ahead of the games to meet OCA deadlines.

An expressway is also being built to try to ease some of the traffic snarls for which the Thai capital is notorious, which would help spectators and participants reach venues on time.

Asian Squash Championship

Malaysia capture women's team title Hong Kong take on Pakistan in men's final today

by a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Malaysia Monday overcame Hong Kong 2/1 to clinch the women's team title at the 8th Asian Squash Championship which concludes here Tuesday.

Carrie Yea secured Malaysia's title after defeating Cristina Naak 3/0 (9-5, 9-6, 9-1) in the third match of the tie.

In an earlier match, Hong Kong's Rebecca Chiu upset newly-crowned Asian champion Leong Suiyunn of Malaysia. Chiu took the lead 8-6, 9-5 but 14-year-old Suiyunn who had dethroned India's Meesha Jhangir in the singles final took the next two 9-6, 9-7. However, the final one went 9-1 to Chiu.

Earlier Malaysia's Yea easily overcame Iris Chung of Hong Kong 3/0 (9-7, 9-7, 9-1) in the final first tie of the final.

Singapore took third place after upsetting India 2/1. Malaysia's win of the tournament's women's team and singles crowns capped a perfect tournament. Prior to the competition the team's coach Jamie Hickox had told the Jordan Times that his team was aiming for 1st place in the women's competition and 2nd place in the men's.

Men's final concludes tournament

Hong Kong and Pakistan qualified for the final of men's

team title after overcoming their second round opponents at the 8th Asian Squash Championship which concludes today.

Pakistan had defeated Jordan 3/0 while Hong Kong beat Malaysia to reach the final.

Jordan will now play Malaysia for 3rd and 4th places today at 3:30 p.m. The Kingdom's best result in the Asian Championship was fourth in 1988.

Meanwhile, India captured fifth place after overcoming Kuwait 2-1. While Kuwait came in sixth, they were followed by Singapore who beat Sri Lanka 2-1 to finish seventh, while Sri Lanka took eighth.

In other matches, Lebanon beat Palestine 3/0 and Bahrain defeated Chinese Taipei 3/0. Lebanon will now meet Bahrain for 9th and 10th places while Palestine will play Chinese Taipei for 11th and 12th.

South Korea came in last at 13th.

Five Arab countries are among the 13 teams in the competition. They represent Malaysia, Pakistan, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Bahrain, Hong Kong, India, South Korea, Kuwait, Lebanon, Taiwan, and Jordan.

Pakistan are the seven time winners of the competition and seem set to retain it again despite missing top seed Jansher Khan who pulled out of the tournament on its second day citing backache.

Titleholders Pakistan will play Hong Kong at Al Hassan Squash Centre at 6 p.m.

African Nations Cup

Tournament's youngest player secures team's win

BLOEMFONTEIN (AFP) — The youngest ever player in the tournament, Mohamed Kallon, hit a last-minute goal for Sierra Leone for a 2-1 win over Burkina Faso and their first ever victory in the African Nations Cup here on Monday.

It was also Sierra Leone's first ever goals in the event. They qualified once before but lost 4-0 to Ivory Coast and drew 0-0 with Zambia.

Swiss-based substitute Kallon was found free at the far post after good work by Lamine Conte and Amidu Karim.

The 16-year-old tapped the ball home for further celebrations after beating Nigerian Daniel Amokachi's record as the youngest player.

Gbessay Sesay opened the scoring in the 10th minute for Leone, but Aboubacary Ouedraogo equalised 20 minutes from time.

Meanwhile four times champions Ghana lived up to their billing as favourites with an impressive 2-0 defeat of Ivory Coast in the African Nations' Cup.

Goals in each half from European-based strikers Tony Yeboah and Abedi Pele Ayew gave the Black Stars their Group D win and, after the late withdrawal from the tournament of defending champions Nigeria, Ghana appear to be the side to beat.

Surprisingly, Ghana's win was their first against the Ivory Coast in seven meetings since 1970.

Ivory Coast, who won the African Nations' Cup in 1992, were outclassed in the first half as Ghana dominated with their attacking style.

The opening goal came in the 20th minute after central defender Samuel Johnson, who enjoyed an excellent all-round game, produced an incisive burst down the left flank after struggling off three tackles.

Just when it appeared his

solo attack had broken down as he tripped through the final tackle, he managed to recover and his cross found Yeboah inside the circle. The Leeds United striker hammered home a left foot shot from 15 metres.

Minutes into the second half, Pele was denied a near-certain goal when keeper Alain Gouamene pulled off

successive saves from point-blank range.

Ivory Coast then enjoyed their best to opportunities of the match when, first, midfielder Traore Moussa headed wide of the left-hand post and, minutes later, defender Dao Lassina's well-struck free kick from outside the circle was saved by Ghanaian goalkeeper Simon

Addo.

But the Ghanaian defence, rock solid throughout the match, stood firm and Pele, twice Africa's footballer of the year, sealed the result in the 70th minute, scoring on the half-volley from the narrowest of angles.

Earlier, Zambia and Algeria drew 0-0 in a Group B match in Bloemfontein.

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SOUTH ♠ K J 8 3 2 ♥ A J 7 ♦ A K 7 ♣ K Q			
The bidding: WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH Pass Pass Pass 2NT			

West's opening heart lead gave South some breathing room. Nonetheless, it still seemed that the fate of the contract hinged on finding one of the defenders with a doubleton queen of diamonds. But what what happened on the way to the Forum.

Declarer captured East's queen of hearts with the ace and crossed to dummy with the king of hearts to lead a club to the king. The defense would have been in no trouble had West won the ace, but the defender made the "automatic" duck, which could be right on a different lie of the cards. It certainly wasn't here.

Declarer cashed all the major-suit winners, reducing the closed hand to three diamonds and the queen of clubs. West came down to three diamonds and the ace of clubs. When declarer cashed the ace of diamonds, East dropped the ten in the hope that declarer would play for queen-ten here. But declarer exited with a club, and West's forced diamond return away from the queen presented declarer with an extra trick in that suit and the contract.

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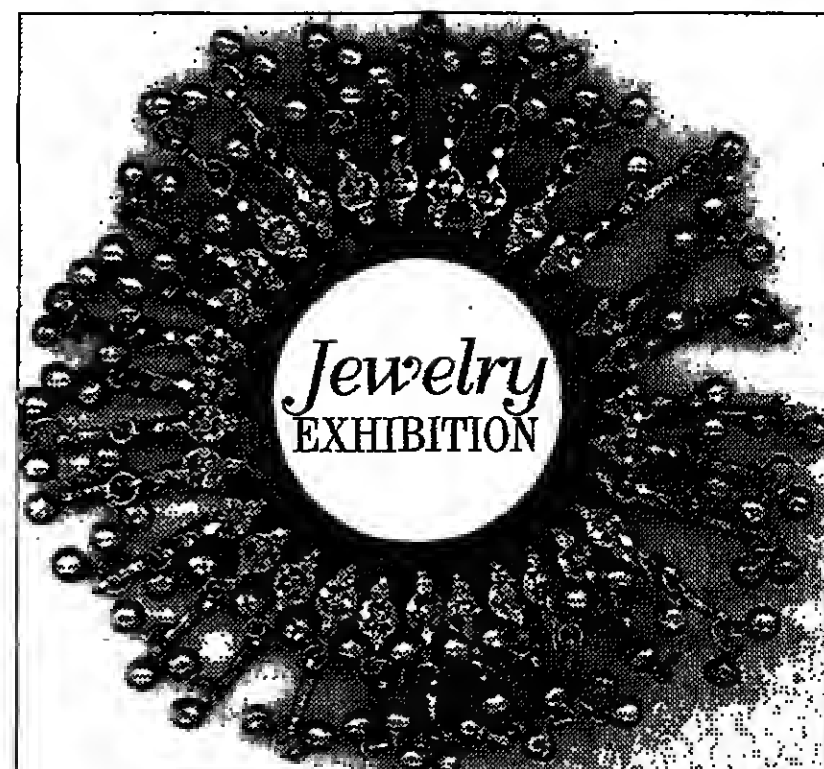
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TODAY AT

French mediator optimistic about settling Red Sea dispute

CAIRO (AFP) — A French envoy mediating between Eritrea and Yemen in their conflict over a chain of strategic Red Sea islands said Monday that a peace settlement was possible.

Francis Gutmann said at the end of a shuttle mission to the region: "I strongly believe that a peaceful settlement is possible."

He said both Yemen and Eritrea wanted to resolve their conflict over the Hanish islands through negotiation, but added "that does not mean to say that the situation is not still worrying."

Eritrean forces seized Hanish Al Kabir island Dec. 18 after a three-day battle with Yemeni troops.

Both countries claim the Hanish archipelago near the mouth of the Red Sea, whose ownership has never been settled by international convention.

Mr. Gutmann was spending several hours in Egypt at the end of his tour, which has taken him to Eritrea, Yemen, Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia.

He held talks here with Egyptian Foreign Minister

King meets Eritrean envoy

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Monday received a message from Eritrean President Issaias Afewerki dealing with the latest developments in the Yemeni-Eritrean dispute over the Red Sea island of Hanish delivered by Eritrean Interior Minister Ali Abdullah.

Speaking to the envoy at the Royal Court the King called for settling the dispute through dialogue and arbitration and through peaceful means, urging both sides to refrain from resorting to force.

The meeting was attended by Chief of the Royal Court Marwan Al Qasem.

Amr Musa, whose country has also tried to mediate in the conflict.

Mr. Musa said afterwards that mediators were still at the stage of trying to "defuse the crisis to avoid an armed conflict."

Mr. Musa said afterwards that mediators were still at the stage of trying to "defuse the crisis to avoid an armed conflict."

Afterwards they would try to persuade Yemen and Eritrea to pull their troops out of the islands and accept international arbitration to settle their maritime borders," Mr. Musa said.

He added Mr. Gutmann would return to Djibouti after consultations with the French government. "The issue is urgent and we have no time to waste," Mr. Musa said.

Yemen and Eritrea asked France to head mediation efforts because they preferred a "non-Arab and non-African" country to bear the dispute, Mr. Musa said.

On Sunday, Mr. Gutmann met Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who told him that Yemen fully supported French attempts to help settle the conflict, the official Yemeni news agency

SABA said.

Mr. Saleh stressed his country's wish to settle the dispute peacefully according to the law of the sea and international law.

Earlier on Sunday, the team headed by Mr. Gutmann, a former French foreign ministry official, met Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal in Riyadh for a briefing on Saudi Arabia's view of the conflict, a diplomat said.

Saudi Arabia said on Dec. 25 that the Red Sea archipelago belonged to Yemen and denounced Eritrea for "resorting to force" by capturing the island of Hanish Al Kabir Dec. 18 after three days of fighting.

The French delegation on Saturday held talks with Yemen's Vice President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi and Prime Minister Abdel Aziz Abdel Ghani.

On Wednesday the team visited Ethiopia, which along with Egypt is leading mediation efforts in the conflict. It is also due to visit the Eritrean capital Asmara.



DUTCH PRIME MINISTER AND HIS WIFE DURING JERASH TOUR: Dutch Prime Minister Wim Kok and his wife Monday visit the Greco-Roman city of Jerash near Amman. Mr. Kok met His Majesty King Hussein shortly after arriving from Damascus on Sunday where they discussed Middle East peace and economic cooperation (Reuters photo)

More Terracotta Warriors unearthed in Xi'an

BEIJING (AFP) — Chinese archaeologists have unearthed more than 100 Terracotta Warriors and a unique carriage at a world-famous site near the city of Xi'an, the official Xinhua News Agency reported. The finds were unearthed during a dig at the museum of Terracotta Warriors and horses, located 37 kilometres from the capital of Shanxi province, the agency said. The museum was built over three pits full of Terracotta Warriors and horses, guards to the nether world for the first emperor of the Qin Dynasty (221-206 B.C.). The new finds were made in the last of three pits excavated, Xinhua reported. The 6,000-square-metre pit and its beams, pillars, passages and doorways had been preserved relatively intact because it suffered little damage from a fire in the late Qin Dynasty. The finds included warriors mounted on horseback, shooting warriors and a carriage with four warriors — the first carriage found in the museum, which archaeologists believe tomb robbers spared because they were only interested in gold and silver. Two of the pits had earlier been excavated and opened to the public. Excavation of the third pit, thought to contain the richest store of relics, began in 1994, the agency said.

Prisoners escape using knotted bed sheets

NANCY, France (AFP) — Six inmates escaped from prison here Monday after knotting together bed sheets and climbing from a roof. An AFP correspondent said a "rope" of 15 white sheets could be seen hanging from the Charles III Prison here two hours after the inmates escaped at about 7 a.m. (0600 GMT). Prison Director Hubert Moreau said the six, several of Turkish origin, had shared a cell. They had sawed through bars to escape via the roof. The prisoners, thought to be hiding in Nancy, were not described as dangerous.

Artist wins fake painting lawsuit

SHANGHAI (AFP) — A Chinese artist has won a copyright infringement suit against an auctioneer who used his name to sell a painting for more than 500,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$68,493), Xinhua News Agency reported Monday. The Shanghai Intermediate People's Court ordered Duo Yunxuan to pay Wu Guanzhong 73,000 yuan (\$8,795) and make a public apology in the overseas edition of the People's Daily, the party organ. Mr. Wu said artists were becoming increasingly concerned with their own rights now. "My suit is the first ever of this kind in the country. The correct handling of it will have a positive influence on the art market. The case has won back honour for us artists and set a good example of protecting intellectual property rights," he said. Mr. Wu said he did not paint the work entitled Bombard The Headquarters which showed Mao Tse-tung writing a big character poster which triggered the Cultural Revolution in 1966. Duo Yunxuan informed Mr. Wu two years ago that the piece would be auctioned in Hong Kong and Mr. Wu immediately notified the gallery that he was not the painter and asked for it to be withdrawn but the auctioneer sold it anyway to a Taiwanese businessman. Mr. Wu filed the case against the gallery in the Shanghai Intermediate People's Court on Sept. 28, 1995.

At least 12 hostages killed in Russian assault on Chechen rebels

OUTSIDE PEROVOMAIKAYA, Russia (AFP) — At least 12 hostages died Monday when Russian troops backed by helicopter gunships and armour launched a massive assault on Chechen rebels holding more than 100 captives in a Dagestani village.

At nightfall the Russian troops were controlling most of the village of Perovomai-kaya, a few kilometres from the border with neighbouring Chechnya, Interfax news agency reported, quoting Russian military officials.

The officials said mopping-up operations by special forces would continue in the village overnight until all the rebels had been wiped out

and the hostages freed. Warplanes were firing flares to illuminate Perovomai-kaya, they said.

"Federal military units have occupied most of Perovomai-kaya," a spokesman for the Russian command told Interfax near the village, lying on a snowbound plain.

Russian officials said the rebels, numbering around 150, executed 12 hostages Monday, but another nine captives were freed during the assault.

A Chechen rebel spokesman said 15 hostages were killed during the Russian attack.

Russian artillery and helicopter gunships started pounding Perovomai-kaya af-

ter a final ultimatum to the separatist rebels expired at 9:00 a.m. (0600 GMT) Monday.

Plumes of black smoke billowed over the village, while residents in the nearby village of Sovetskoye said the school in Perovomai-kaya and a house on the main street were set ablaze in the attack.

Both sides gave conflicting figures for the casualty toll.

The separatists, who are fighting for independence from Russia, said their forces killed 34 Russian soldiers for the loss of seven rebels.

The Russian authorities said four Russian soldiers were killed in the assault and 14 wounded, but claimed 60 separatists were killed.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin vowed that the assault would be over later in the day, but Russian interior ministry spokesman Leonid Golovnev said the well-armed rebels were putting up fierce resistance.

A Russian military official quoted by Interfax said none of the buildings where the hostages were being held had been hit.

Mr. Yeltsin said no children remained among the hostages. The rebels, who have been holed up in the village with their captives since Wednesday, "should be punished and terrorism eradicated from Chechen soil," he insisted.

Ethiopia denies attacking Sudan

ADDIS ABABA (R) — Ethiopia on Monday denied attacking neighbouring Sudan, saying the accusation by the Khartoum government was a tactic to divert international attention from charges of terrorism levelled against it.

A government statement said Khartoum was also trying to stifle debate in the U.N. Security Council on Ethiopia's request that Sudan hands over gunmen accused of trying to kill Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak last year.

"It is to be recalled that Ethiopia's request for the U.N. Security Council to take up the issue of Sudanese involvement in the assassination attempt against Mubarak is under active consideration

at the present time," the statement said.

"It is while this request was being considered by the Security Council that Sudan in line with its usual practice of seeking diversionary tactics lodged a protest with the U.N. against Ethiopia claiming that aggression had been committed against its territory by Ethiopia," it added.

On Saturday, a Sudanese army statement accused Ethiopia of attacking its border posts in a two-week offensive. The statement said Ethiopian troops had mounted a "continuous armed offensive" against eastern border posts.

It said Ethiopian troops attacked Dec. 27 Baslam area in the town of Gedaref, about 70 kilometres north of

the border, and extensively shelled Al Kodi with artillery.

They then attacked and occupied the border post of Hamrawia Al Rabad. It said the Ethiopians also seized Allawa.

On Sunday, Sudan said it had declared a general mobilisation in the Gedaref area to confront attacks from Ethiopian troops.

The state-run Sudan News Agency (SUNA) quoted the governments calling on citizens to join the Jihad (holy struggle) "to confront aggression on the Sudanese lands."

Sudan has called for an urgent meeting of the United Nations Security Council in New York to discuss the conflict.

Amnesty urges Egypt to pardon militants on death row

CAIRO (AFP) — Amnesty International urged Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on Monday to pardon six Muslim militants condemned to death for seeking to topple his government.

The international rights group called on national and world opinion to "send messages to Mubarak appealing to him to use his powers to commute the death sentences and those pending" against other Islamic extremists.

In a statement received by AFP, Amnesty condemned the system under which sentences, once ratified by the president, can only be appealed to the Military Appeals Office, headed by Mr. Mubarak.

"Such procedures fall far short of international standards for fair trial," Amnesty said.

A military court on Saturday condemned to death six members of the Muslim militant group Gamaa Islamiyah and handed out prison terms to 12 others of up to 15 years, most with hard labour.

The condemned were among 24 militants arrested in June and November who police said had received orders from Sudan to "assassinate major figures and commit attacks on strategic locations."

Amnesty underlined in its statement its "concern at the continuing upsurge in the use of the death penalty" in the government's suppression of a three-year campaign by armed extremists.

Seven months after the wave of Islamist violence began in March 1992, Mr. Mubarak ordered most militant cases to be heard by military courts, which issue "more rapid and dissuasive sentences."

In the past two years, 73 militants have been sentenced to death, 48 of whom have been executed. More than 940 people have died in the unrest.

Appeal for 'heretic' professor to begin in February

Meanwhile, legal sources

said lawyers for an Egyptian university professor convicted of "heresy" for his writings on Islam and ordered divorced from his wife will begin his appeal against the sentence Feb. 26.

The 25 defence lawyers for Nasr Hamed Abu Zaid will bring their case before the supreme court after spending months reviewing the unprecedented verdict against the Cairo University professor by a lower appeals court June 14.

The lower court ruled in favour of Islamist lawyers, declared Abu Zaid an apostate and ordering him divorced from his wife Ibtihal Yunis on the grounds that a Muslim cannot be married to a heretic.

The supreme court will hear three combined appeals by Mr. Abu Zaid and Ms. Yunis, and the appeals court general prosecutor. Mr. Abu Zaid's defence team is led by the president of the lawyers' union, Ahmed Khawaga.

Although prosecutors and police have not attempted to forcibly separate the couple, Mr. Abu Zaid and Ms. Yunis voiced fears that fundamentalists would attempt to kill the professor, as under Islamic law heresy is punished by execution.

The couple went to the Netherlands after the decision, where they received a research grant, and will not attend the appeal.

The lower court based its rulings on Mr. Abu Zaid's scholarly writings, which the professor insists give a "modern interpretation" of Islam's Holy Book the Koran and Islamic Sharia law.

But an advisory report prepared by the supreme court prosecutor and received by AFP backed the appeals court ruling, saying, "the works of Abu Zaid demonstrate his apostasy."

Reports to the lower court from Al Azhar, Sunni Islam's highest scholarly institution, "also show his apostasy and even his insistence on defending his ideas," the prosecutor report said.

Lesotho's king dies in car accident

MASERU (Agencies) — Lesotho's King Moshoeshoe II died in a car accident early Monday. Prime Minister Ntsu Mokhehle said in a broadcast to the nation.

"With the deepest sorrow I announce that I received a message from the police that at about four o'clock (0200 GMT)... His Majesty King Moshoeshoe died suddenly in a road accident," the aged and ailing prime minister said.

He ordered national mourning until the king's burial, which was likely to be held at the weekend.

King Moshoeshoe's wife, Queen Mamoah, will act as regent until the college of chiefs appoints a successor. It is expected that King Moshoeshoe's son Letsie will succeed him.

English-educated Moshoeshoe, 57, returned to the throne a year ago, replacing Letsie, after having been ousted in 1990 by military rulers in the southern African

mountain nation of 1.6 million people.

The circumstances of the accident were not immediately known. The prime minister said it occurred in the Maseru district, between Ha Noha and Marakebel.

It was not immediately known why the announcement of the death was delayed.

Letsie gave way to his father in January last year under pressure from South Africa, which surrounds Lesotho, and other southern African states after having sparked a constitutional crisis.

Letsie, 32, had sacked Mokhehle, the country's first democratically-elected prime minister in two decades.

King Moshoeshoe was made paramount chief of Lesotho by the British colonial administration and became king under the 1966 independence constitution.

Bosnian PoW release aborted as Serbs jam roads

SARAJEVO (R) — A planned mass release of prisoners of war was aborted on Monday as Serbs jammed roads to ferry valuables out of Sarajevo at the start of a key week in the Bosnian peace process.

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) officials said plans to free hundreds of prisoners still held from the 3½-year conflict on Monday had been aborted after the Bosnian government refused to give up its Serb detainees because thousands of missing Muslims were still unaccounted for.

"The Bosnians say they are not going to comply," said the ICRC's Jacques de Maio in Sarajevo. "We can only regret they didn't follow our plan which allowed for the comprehensive release of prisoners, which was an important step for building confidence."

The Dayton peace plan demands that all sides release their prisoners by Friday. The Bosnian Croats and separatist Serbs had moved to release their prisoners on

Monday, Mr. De Maio said. "They (ICRC) shouldn't have expected us to go ahead with this," said a Bosnian government exchange committee official, who said the Bosnian Serbs had offered to release only 200 people. The official said 24,000 Muslims were missing.

A desperate rush was under way among Sarajevo Serbs to ferry out their belongings before their areas revert to Muslim-led government control under the peace accord.

The narrow road leading from Serb-held suburbs up Mount Trebevic was jammed with dilapidated trucks, cars and tractors piled with chairs, tables, bedding and other household items.

Serbs are paying as much as 1,000 German marks (\$700) to hire a truck for a day. "Some people are getting rich off this exodus," said one official.

U.N. spokesman Alexander Ivankov said units of the unarmed U.N. international police started patrols on Monday in Ilidza, one of the

city's Serb-held suburbs, in an operation intended to give Serbs the confidence to stay on rather than flee.

The Bosnian government is due to take control of the Serb areas on Friday, and by mid-March government soldiers will be permitted to enter.

Along Bosnia's tortuous 1,000 kilometre confrontation line, the NATO-led peace implementation force (IFOR) is supervising mine clearance operations in what will become a "zone of separation" patrolled by foreign soldiers.

By Friday, Serb, Muslim and Croat troops must withdraw from the line by two kilometres on either side and inform NATO of the locations of heavy weapons within 10 kilometres. NATO officials in Sarajevo said 75-80 per cent of the "zone of separation" was already empty.

Two Bosnian Croat soldiers and a Bosnian Serb have been killed during the past week in mine-clearing operations in southern Bos-

nia, a spokesman for Spanish IFOR troops said on Monday. De-mining is hampered by inaccurate mine charts.

Carl Bildt, who is co-ordinating the civilian peace effort in Bosnia, said on Monday it would be extremely difficult to meet a September deadline for elections there, but stressed the international community had no choice but to meet the deadline.

"If we can't, the whole peace process will be jeopardised," he told reporters. The migrations of hundreds of thousands of Bosnians during the past 3½ years makes the drawing up of electoral registers the biggest difficulty.

A small number of Muslim families have won back homes they were forced to leave in the Bosnian Serb stronghold of Banja Luka, in what the U.N.'s refugee agency UNHCR said was an encouraging sign. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims and Croats have been "ethnically cleansed" from the region. The UNHCR said in Gene-

va Bosnians forced from their homes might soon be able to surf the Internet to find out whether it is safe to return to their native villages, through an "on-line" repatriation service.

Under foreign diplomatic and military pressure, Bosnian Croats and Muslims promised on Sunday to make progress within two weeks on shoring up their federation, the cornerstone of the Bosnia peace process.

Both the commander of NATO forces in the country, U.S. Admiral Leighton Smith and German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel visited the divided southern Bosnian town of Mostar.

Mr. Kinkel gave the two communities in Mostar, which was devastated in a 1993 Muslim-Croat war, two weeks to iron out their differences.

Four of six Swedish soldiers injured in Bosnia when their armoured vehicle bit a landmine 30 kilometres northwest of Tuzla Sunday were being flown home on Sunday.